



Kyôka

Japan's Comic Verse

*A MAD IN
TRANSLATION
Reader*

狂訳・駄弁
robin d. gill

p a r a v e r s e p r e s s

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Cover photo. No, it is *not* gallows humor. The rope is graced by a knot called a *monkey's paw* (or *monkey fist*, etc.) that serves as both an ornament and a built-in weight for throwability. This one was found on the beach of Key Biscayne, Florida, and digitally captured by a flat-bed scanner in the dark. While, in the Sinosphere, the monkey represents the *ego* controlling the *id*, a horse, the author, who happens to be his own editor and book-designer, rightly or wrongly thinks of all fellow primates as comics at heart and the art of mad translation 狂訳 as the best of all monkey business.

奉

to all
who let
the grass
grow up be-
tween the cracks

卄

いざ子ども狂業なせそ天地の固めし国そ大倭島根は
iza kodomo tawawaza na se so ametsuchi no
 Well, kids, crazy doings not-do-not+emph heaven-earth's
katameshi kuni zo yamato shimane wa
 solidified country! yamato isle-root-as-for
 藤原朝臣奏之 万葉集 #4487

From a Minister to his men
 speaking for the Empress
 who expected big things



*Get with it, Kiddos,
 Stop thy craziness, start work!
 Is this not Yamato,
 the Isle where land and sky
 out of murk solidified?*

Yeah, right!

~~~~~  
 I do not know if Minister Fujiwara Sônosuke sang out this *waka* to his cabinet who were out in the garden playing *kemari* (keep-the-ball-in-the-air-as-long-as-you-can-kick-it-up), *go* (the world's top intellectual board-game, a Chinese invention), chugalugging *sake*, singing dirty songs or other activities all of which any sane and healthy man enjoys, or, instead, was written down and a copy sent to each *kodomo* to call them back from their vacations on Day-18 of Month-11 of the Founding Year of the Tenbyôhōji 天平宝字 or Heaven's Fair Treasure Letter era, *i.e.*, 757 anno Domini; but, I do know that the grand dreams of the Empress Kôken 孝謙天皇 (718-770) did not come to fruition, or at least created so much discord she became the excuse for ending the practice of female heads of state in Japan! Maybe, the men – *kids/children* is a paternalistic term of endearment Bashô would later use to address his disciples, calling on them to run about in the hail – should have been left to their *tawawaza* or horse-play, which I translated as “craziness” because of the 狂 character we will see a lot of in this book. The *katameshi*, “solidified” or “made stable” seems a good antithesis for the same, and the “murk” was added less for the rhyme with “work” (also added in lieu of a preface), then because readers unfamiliar with the Japanese myth referred to may have a concept of The Beginning that differs from one where heaven and earth are not *created*, or set into motion, but fertilized and/or congealed. That dripping and stirring (a jeweled halberd in the sea) is halfway to the nature of translation, which, mad or not, is neither creation nor procreation, but *recreation*.



FIG. 109

★ The man walking about “wearing the carapace of the gigantic crab on his head” in lieu of the hat (that Japanese did not wear as commonly as “we” did at the time) was sketched by Edward Morse in the 19c (*Japan Day by Day*, my shading added). Observed that “many looked at the man as he passed and some smiled,” he generalized: “*An illustration of the tolerance of the people and the good manners of the children is shown in the fact that no matter how grotesque or odd some of the people appear in dress, no one shouted at them, laughs at them, or disturbs them in any way.*” A similar eccentric in the United States would not only have been jeered at, but risked bodily harm. Even as late as the early-1960’s, one could be assaulted for wearing odd clothing or long hair (Or, was that just true in the South? L.D. reports her father wore what might be called a Davy Crockett cap for the seashore, namely a horseshoe crab – *helmet-crab* in Japanese! – into Cape Cod shops without incident). Japanese in the USA in the late-19c wrote of being physically attacked merely for being different, unlike the case in England, where people were kind to unfamiliar visitors. Usanians were more tolerant of oddity in print, but not if it touched upon what mattered to them. Tom Paine was all but tarred and feathered for his free-thinking; Mark Twain dared not publish his *Letters From the Earth* for fear of the same or worse.

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robin d. gill

狂 ◆ 歌

*All  
translations  
are by the author  
unless otherwise specified.*



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**robin d gill** a.k.a. 敬愚

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## from *Monster* to *Reader*

A *kyôka* 狂歌 is a 31-*mora* (short-syllable) comic or otherwise novel poem that may be thought of as the reverse side of the revered classic *waka*. The first character, usually translated as *mad*, “*mad-cap*” or “*comic*, when referring to poetry, includes connotations of the *insane*, *playful*, *errant*, *free*, *wild*, *outrageous* and *self-deprecatory*. In the case of this book, it *also* refers to the extreme, some might call *excessive*, liberties taken by your translator, whose excuse is that, because English and Japanese are mutually exotic, there is more re-creation than ferrying – *translation* literally means “*carried across*” – going on, anyway. Indeed, he has coined a new word for this out-of-order yet needed art in Japanese. It is 狂訳 (‘mad translation’) or *kyôyaku*.

The mother lode, *Mad in Translation – a thousand years of kyôka, comic Japanese poetry in the classic waka mode*, is, a 2000-poem, 200-chapter, 740-page mine of information about this hitherto ignored genre, published on the longest day of 2009.

As the 740-page *Monster* boasts more *I*’s than a dragonfly, it was deemed best to remove most or replace them for this humble *Reading* by “your translator,” who carefully chose about 500 poems from the original selection to offer a double distillation high-proof sample with improved translations, explanations and interpretation. The scattershot of tiny two-page chapters and notes have been pounded down and fused into a score of cannonball-sized thematic chapters with – hopefully – just enough weight to bowl over most specialists yet not bore the amateur and sink a potentially broad-beamed readership.

One word *almost* got into the title: *snake-legs*. 蛇足, or *dasoku*, meaning “redundant.” A snake can move well enough without legs. The most common *use* of the word is to designate short explanations in a way that the reader who might not need them will not feel insulted, or (to be blunt) the reader who may really need the help but does not want to admit it will not be insulted. The implication is that the author explains too much. Thus, *snake-legs* embody the conventional humility and respect for the other, expressed more explicitly in the Sinosphere (the greater culture Japan shares) than the Occident. Because *kyôka* are nothing if not witty, and wit often dies in translation, it is not enough to provide the usual tidbits of cultural background. Even with the invention of titles, complex puns and compensatory rhyming, additional *open discussion of translation problems* (with the text and not hidden in end-notes) is the only way the original may truly be understood by those who cannot read it as-is. For some poems, I am afraid, said snake becomes a centipede.

## *What are kyôka & why are they not better known?*

*There is an absolute freedom both in respect  
of language and choice of subject. The kiôka  
must be funny, that is all."*

— William J Aston

*History of Japanese Literature* 1899

Sound interesting? One might expect a poem such as Aston defines would be popular both in Japanese and in translation, but such is not the case.

*Wit*, even more than *poetry*, is lost in translation between exotic tongues as it may only be recovered by a translator willing to do things that might be thought beyond the pale if only, that is, anyone would think to do them. Due to the contrary (compared to English) order of the verb and the object, not to mention a common practice in Japanese poetry (not speech) of ending on the subject, the snapper, which is to say, the punch-word that should bring the wit to a head as close as possible to the tail of the poem, usually refuses to stay put in translation, while there is nothing under the pun that Japanese *kyôka* poets do not try. Just to give the bare bones of the multiple meanings in the original may require more than one translation. Lafcadio Hearn and Blyth both made at least one such composite translation while introducing *kyôka*, but the result was neither poetic nor witty. To actually flesh, *i.e.* reincarnate those bones, or supply the context and multiple meanings while re-creating the poetry and the wit, or something akin to it, with art enough that it may be appreciated in the reading and the rereading – most good short poems are like good music for they can be reread and are not killed by explanation – is harder yet. *Mad In Translation* was, in part, an experiment to see if it were possible. Your translator still does not know if the answer is *yes* or *no*, or, rather, if the percent of successful translations is high enough to justify a year of unpaid labor. Regardless, it is understandable why so few *kyôka* have been Englished and not surprising almost all that have been are accompanied by beautiful color prints (*surimono*) that make up for the loss in translation.

Lack of sufficient appreciation for *kyôka* in Japan is less excusable. Both specialists and literary lions have been remiss in their public duty, namely introducing work of merit others might enjoy if only they knew of it. *Kyôka*, by whatever name, spent centuries as the shadow, or the reverse side of the officially recognized 31-*mora* (short syllable) *waka*, or *tanka*, and despite short periods of intense popularity in parts of Japan, most Japanese know even less about *kyôka* and *kyôka* poets than most English speakers do about 'our' rhyming wits. Many specialists in Japanese



literature may not have heard of the Rabelaisian 16 and 17c *kyôka*-masters one might consider the equivalent of Heywood and Rochester (Yûchôrô and Getsudôken, whom you will meet in this book) or, for that matter, the work of *haikai* poets who were not officially involved in *kyôka* but wrote such poems on their own such as Issa. Most have read some *kyôka* by the Zen maverick Ikkyû and encountered others in old comic stories or as squibs recorded in books of history but what serious attention is given to *kyôka* is almost entirely reserved for the late-18c *kyôka* boom triggered by the genius of wit and good editorial sense, Ôta Nanpo, aka Yomo no Akara and Shokusanjin, both because Nanpo and friends were indeed a talented group and their poems reflect the prematurely Dadaist or even post-modern flexibility of Edo's liveliest literatae, and because talking up Edo was only natural when this "water-gate" renamed Tokyo, or East-capital, self-consciously lead the world in the heady "Japan as Number One" days of the late-1970's and 80's. Even after the reproduction of almost 200 old books in *Kyôka Taikan*, or *Mad Poem Broadview*, gave clear proof of its worth in 1982/4, earlier pre-Edo (mostly Kansai: Ôsaka, Kyôto, etc) *kyôka* remained under-rated and ignored. And, worse yet, the larger matter of the relationship of *kyôka* to *waka* – namely, being the informal, comic side of it and not merely its contrary – expounded in part by Kaneko Jitsue as early as 1927, has yet to be grasped by the slow-moving behemoth of *Literary History* that pays more attention to lines of pedigree (teacher-student chains of begetting and the official identification of sources/collections) and names (*kyôka* history starting with and ending with the name, *kyôka*) than style and content, which is harder to classify. As a result, *kyôka* tends to be mistakenly equated with its forte, the parody, while the witty and often even wacky side of *waka* is simply ignored. Meanwhile, scholars writing in English, unsure of their reading or humble before the Japanese literary establishment, represented by Hamada Giichirô who is by far the most often quoted, have – with the exception of Edwin Cranston, who introduces many delightful light *waka* in his recent translations (though he does not directly treat *kyôka*) – simply parroted, or by the nature of their selections, reinforced, that view.

Please do not get the wrong idea. My intention is not to put others down but to let you know *this* is not only not like the many books out there with the same damn classic poems from traditional collections translated over and over again, it is not even close to anything you will find in *Japanese*. You will be among the first to find out just how much *reason* – which carried to extremes tends to become *mad* in the best sense of the word – and wit have always existed, yet, since the oh-so-serious-20c, have seldom if ever been appreciated in Japanese poetry. If you would have more history than provided in this *Reader* (p.271-4), please see the entire *Short & Inadequate yet Broad History* in the back of the 740-page *Monster*.

泪の種ではなくて、笑の種を秘めて居る三十一字詩である。  
*31-syllable poems that contain not seeds of tears, but of laughter.*

金子実英 from a 'History of *Kyôka* by Kaneko Jitsue in *Shokusankashû*, 1927.

~~~~~

*mad (light) waka . . . not so much making a fool
of the original writer as in European verse;
rather "lightening" it, in the sense of
omitting all the seriousness that
so easily falls into
sentimentality.*

R. H. Blyth. *Oriental Humor* 1959

~~~~~

The *kyôka* scholar Hamada Giichirô defines *kyôka* as traditional waka in a thirty-one-syllable verse form that expresses nontraditional, incongruous content and which eschews elegant diction and sophisticated prosody designed to move heaven and earth. In other words, he says a satirically humorous perspective is invoked by, as it were, the heart of a poet who wears a "robe made of silk brocade" but who ties it with a "sash made of straw." In my view, this captures the genre exactly. . . . *kyôka* extracts wit and humor from materials found in ordinary daily life, invariably transforming elegance into plebeianism and seriousness into mockery by its improvisations.

Rokuo Tanaka "*Forgotten Women: Two Kyôka Poets of the Tenmei Era*" in J. M. Davis ed. *Understanding Humor in Japan*, Wayne St. U. P., 2006

~~~~~

While this beautiful summary of Hamada Giichirô and Tanaka's own view of *kyôka* is almost perfect, one correction *might* be made: the mad poet of Japan *also* liked to wear a hempen robe, or a hair cloth and tie it with a sash made of silk. For example, a gift of some agricultural product might be accompanied with an equally earthy message bound up in elegant grammar, which is to say classic *waka* trimming. Perhaps that *could* be seen as "transforming elegance into plebeianism," but, in my opinion, it makes more sense to see such as *making the plebeian outrageously elegant*. Even our short *Reading of Mad in Translation* has examples enough to allow readers to make up their own minds on this and other defining matters. While the *740-page Monster* has many more definitions, they are mostly for entertainment's sake, as Aston said about all that can be said for sure.

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&. Ampersands serve to shorten lines for design reasons; they also show in English a little of the enormous variation of orthography taken for granted by users of Japanese.

As-for. One of the ugliest make-do's in the word-for-word gloss, it has long stood for the topical “wa” following a subject. Sometimes, space demands “as4.” *No problem*. The better to show it is only an awkward didactic device, far from the un-Englishable original.

Broadview. The first really large and inclusive printed collection of *kyōka*, where I found almost all of the poems ante-dating the mid-18c that I translated (except for the *waka*). This *Kyōka Taikan* 狂歌大観(1982/4) is thoroughly described in the bibliography.

c.16c, 17c, etc. Using c. for “century” saves space and, for the reason explained above (&) to share something of Japanese-style active reading w/ English-speakers.

Cloudy or muddy marks. See **diacritical marks**.

Diacritical Marks. かがさざしじただはば。The first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth syllabets, pronounced *ka, sa, shi, ta, and ha*, respectively, do not have them. The second, forth, sixth, eighth, and tenth, pronounced *ga, za, ji, da and ba*, do. Japanese call them 濁点 *dakuten*, or “clouded/murky-dots” A linguist informs me the former are *unvoiced* and the latter *voiced*. Orthographically speaking, I suppose the か would be an unvoiced が, but such terms make practical sense only with a language where consonants alone cannot be read outloud but only when a vowel is added. With Japanese, where the former (*ka*) is every bit as pronounceable as the latter (*ga*), they are simply different *mora*. “Glottalization,” literally, *tonguing*, beats *voiced*, for the “g” at least has the right feeling; but not all of the dotted letters are tongued. With *h* (はひふへほ *hahihuheho*) vs. *b* (ばびぶべぼ *babibubebo*, for example, it is the *lips* that do or do not touch each other. Others are or are not *fricative*, etc.. As *glotalization* has come to mean *stopped-up*, and as all these letters are by tongue or lip or palate somewhat touched in passage, it does loosely fit. But comparing *h* and *b* again, while the lips *do* close for the latter, when they are released it comes out all the more *explosively*, so “stopped up” is but part of the sound and not the whole. Personally, I think that *sharp* vs *blunt*, *crisp* vs *cloudy*, *muddy* vs *clean*, i.e., the original Japanese way of thinking about these diacritical marks better reflects both the phonemic changes and the way Japanese actually think of them, so I usually use something like the Japanese expression, eg. *muddy marks*, or the vague *diacritical marks*. Common ellipsis of these marks in *waka* vastly increased the possibilities for punning. I assumed it was done simply for speedy writing or for wit's sake, but recently was taught that the ambiguity preserved the monopoly of disciples or heirs who could teach others when to add or not to add the diacritical marks. Of course, when a pun is intended, such a resolution is not always desirable & the ambiguity creates difficulty for reading poems aloud, unless they are read twice, once each way. Who knows if that was ever done!

Edo. The capital of the newly unified Japan under Tokugawa shogunate from 1603, it became the world's largest city. Before Edo, Kyōto was the capital. The **Edo period** ends with the opening of Japan and fall of the shogunate in the mid-19c. Now, Tokyo.

Haikai, Hokku & Haiku. *Haikai* first meant wordplay-centered *waka*, but came to mean witty and wild (yet structured) linked-verse of 14 and 17 *mora*. When Bashô (1644-94) was alive, *haikai* included many *ku* that had no seasonal element, but after Bashô, a seasonal element came to be de rigor. *Hokku* were 17-*mora ku* heading the sequence or major sections, but as most collected *ku* from as early as the 16c were not really *hokku* (though usually so called), Shiki in the late-19c decided to call all such *ku*, simply *haiku*.

Hundred Poets. Abbrev. of *Hundred Poets One Poem*, the Ogura *Hyakunin Isshu*, basis for the quick-draw card-matching game that made these *waka* famous & liable to parody.

Hyperlogical. Without humor, Burke's judgment on Paine (*dat operam ut cum ratione insaniat*: he labors to make his mind unsound by means of his reason) might apply. With it, the same might be considered therapeutic. The metaphysical madness that is *kyôka*.

Japanese pronunciation. The vowels are like those of Latin tongues. Learn to say *Buenos Aires* correctly and they are yours. Well, almost. The vowels with “^” over them (the classic long-vowel line is not on our keyboards) may take you years or decades to learn. Just know they sound & count a syllabet longer than vowels without the “^.”

Japanese style. One of my Humpty-Dumpty words. A poem that is nothing but a chain of modification of the subject that brings the poem to a head at the end, or, has only one verb or emphatic expression after said subject confirming it as the subject that does not supply what is missing according to the conventions of all other world poetry that I know of: namely, *a plot*. Perhaps it can be seen as an extension ad absurdum of the *makura-kotoba* = pillow-word, or epithet, or *jo*, a longer preliminary part of the poem that may pun its way into the main message. I await the guidance of linguists as to what I should call this phenomenon invisible in translation as translators rewrite the poems giving them plots, not necessarily on purpose, but because attempts to match the word order rather than reproduce the connections tends to result in that!

Ku. 句 Either short for haiku and other 17-syllabet poems (*senryû* or *zappai*, too), or a part, especially the 5 or 7-syllabet segments, of a 17 or 31-syllabet poem. For the latter usage, a *ku* functions something like the numbered *line* in English poetry for the practical purpose of locating what one is referring to. It is also used for expressions counting 一句、二句 or modifying 佳句 (a good *ku*) (駄句 (a poor = one's own = *ku*) *haiku*, or types of haiku in haikai such as 発句 *hokku* (see above) 平句 *hiraku* (ordinary *ku*), etc.

Kyôka. 狂歌 31-mora comic Japanese poems found in collections of traditional 31-mora high poetry called *waka* or *tanka*, didactic *dôka*, squib *rakushu*, droll tales or parodies, other comic stories, 100% *kyôka* anthologies (16-19c) and, finally, with color prints called *surimono*, esp. early-19c. Most were *yomisute*, read for fun, but never published.

Kyôka Dictionary. A 2000-poem dictionary by Suzuki Tôzô published in 1984 found too late for the original *Monster*. Find it in the Japanese part of the Bibliography.

Kyôku. Haiku that share the comic spirit with *kyôka*. usually called *kokkei* (comic or novel) *haiku*. See the 740-pg monster for more.

Kyômei. Mad-name => Poet names.

Kyôshi. 狂詩 or mad Chinese-style poem. 詩 or poem is used to indicate pretty much all non-Japanese, usually rhyming poetry, but since the mad poets of Japanese did not write poems in Roman letters, but only in characters, *kyôshi* means Chinese-style. The most common form is 4-line with an AABA end-rhyme, but unlike the case with *kyôka*, various lines and rhyme schemes (including no rhyme) were permissible. Ikkyû and other mad monks were particularly enamored with it. Ôta Nampo, still in his teens, loosened it up further, sparking the exploration of a broader range of subject matter.

Mad-cap verse. Used by Steven D. Carter and some others. The “-cap” helps to convey the harmless eccentricity of *kyôka* better than “mad” alone. As I do not care to call unrhymed and unmetered poetry “verse,” I *tried* to avoid the term though, liking the sound of it, I gave in and put “verse” into the title of this *Reader*!

Mad poems. Just plain “comic” will not do for we have other varieties of comic poetry in Japanese as well as *kyôka*. Read this book, then, define them as you wish.

Mimesis. I use this word and *mimetic* a lot. *Onomatopoeia* is semantically too small and alphabetically too large. Japanese has less built-in mimesis than English (eg. *stop*, *shrimp*) but more functioning obviously as adverbs.

Mora. Short-syllables I sometimes call “syllabet.” English syllables are far longer and more variable, so syllable-based translation is far from the Japanese sound-sense.

Muddy Marks. See *Diacritical Marks*.

OJD. The Only Japanese Dictionary is my coinage for the Japanese equivalent of the OED (*Nihon kokugo daijiten*). By far the most important tool for reading old Japanese.

Phonetic Syllabary. In English, only someone who can use sign language yet still speak and hear can truly appreciate the stereo effect Japanese readers enjoy thanks to their limited phonetic syllabary combined with Chinese characters (*kanji* in Japanese). In *Oriental Humour*, Blyth gave examples of fine Chinese puns but Japan's versatile punning cannot be matched by any single-sign writing system. Luckily for all who love puns, Japanese is hard to read with just phonetic syllabary, so the complex – and some would think ponderous – system is in no eminent danger of extinction.

Pivot word. A common Englishing for *kakekotoba* 掛詞, a sleight of tongue so common even in serious *waka* that some think it *de rigor* (it is not), where a word or part of a word is used in two senses, one that goes with what precedes, the other with what follows. Aston, who credits Chamberlain with the term, gives a droll English example: “Thackeray has something of the kind in *The Newcomes*, where he speaks of the tea-pot presented to Mr. Honeyman by the devotees attending his chapel as the ‘devotea-pot.’ Here, the syllable ‘tea’ is contrived a double debt to pay. It represents at the same time the final syllable of ‘devotee’ and the first syllable of ‘tea-pot.’” Expand that before and after and you have it. Still, not all *kakekotoba* pivot and not all pivot words pun. We might also call *kakekotoba* a “contingent word,” as its meaning is contingent upon context and not always only with what preceded it, then what follows it, as is the case for the pivot-word. Cranston defines it as “a form of zeugma in which a set of syllables functions in two senses through an exploitation of homophony, or in which the same word serves double syntactical functions.” Actually, not all change the syntax, but the best usually do. It may be rude or so elegant we must groan not in disgust but admiration.

Poet names. With Japanese, family name comes first. Edo period poets generally went by a two-character a.k.a. or archaic or meaningful pseudonyms. Late-18c poets invented long facetious or parodied archaic names. Egs. explained on pgs. 592-4 of the *Monster*.

Respondent. Mostly Yoshioka Ikuo, a tanka poet and Japan's leading student/scholar of *kyōka* as the laughing side of *waka*, rather than anti-*waka*.

Rhyme. Japanese has almost no end-rhyme but allows for ten or a hundred times more and better puns than English. Words that rhyme associate and thus may be thought of as a weak pun. English needs to take advantage of that to match Japanese wit. Madness in the *kyōka* sense of it means being humble enough to allow coincidence to have a chance. See *A Dolphin In The Woods* (2009) re, the magic rhyme brings to reason.

Savage/Barbarian Songs. 夷曲 *Ikyoku*. The first great *kyōka* anthology, published in 1666, was the *Kokin-ikyoku-shū*, or the Ancient (&) Recent *Savage Song* Anthology.”

Senryū. Like haiku, 17-mora. Comic, but more focused on developing stereotypes of what might be called black humor than *kyōka* or *kyōku*.

Shokusanjin or **Yomo no Akara.** Pen-names of Tenmei *kyōka*'s genius, Ōta Nanpo.

Syllabet. My coinage for the relatively uniform-length Japanese syllable.

Syllable. Better to pay attention to *beats* for English translation. See *mora* above.

Surimono. 摺物 Mostly color prints or a small set of prints with one to a dozen *kyōka* presented by the commissioner, usually the head of a *kyōka* group to students and patrons for the New Year, a season so rich in ritual as to constitute a season separate but equal to the other four (*The Fifth Season*: 2007). 17c *haikai* poets started the tradition and Ōta and friends improved upon it in the late-18c with the involvement of top artists.

Tanka While referring to classic short (31-syllabet) *waka*, because the vast majority of *waka* were short, they were almost always just called *waka* or *uta* (or *ka* for short, or counting, *kubi*), so *tanka* usually means modern *waka* (see below). Said modern *waka* includes poems that classic *waka* poets might have considered *kyōka*.

Tenmei kyōka. The *kyōka* of the 1770-90's considered the golden age of the genre.

Tokuwa Short for *Tokuwa-kago kyōka-shū* (1785). Perhaps the representative Tenmei *kyōka* anthology, reproduced in Iwanami's *Senryū Kyōka shū*.

Visual Reading. *Kyōka* often require one to view the orthography to get the wit.

Waka. Long traditional haute culture poems. The shortest 31-mora form is representative, and sometimes called a *tanka*. *Kyōka* may be considered *waka* light-verse.

On *the* Nature of Kyôka & Nurture of Mad Translation

A preamble from the 740-page Monster, reproduced more or less as-is:

It is not possible that the rest of the world will ever realize the importance of Japanese poetry, because of all poetries it is the most completely untranslatable.

The Originality of Japanese Civilization Arthur Waley, 1929

Of course, this would not hold for translating Japanese into Korean which shares its syntax, but, for English, Japanese is indeed difficult, as English is for Japanese. With prose, where one can work with entire paragraphs, a gifted translator can break, combine and shuffle sentences to restore the good sense of the original unless it is a witty aphorism or humorous definition where the word order matters in which case, nine times out of ten the snapper at the tail shakes its hook (Hence, Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary*, where the barb appropriately is almost always kept for the very tip of the tail, for the most part, comes out flat in Japanese). For literary translation, the translator must have an ear and a tongue for language above and beyond the usual. Waley did. He beautifully Englished classic Japanese prose that even most Japanese translators (putting it into modern Japanese) found challenging. So why did he find Japanese poetry a problem?

Its beauty consists in the perfection with which a thought and a body of sound are fitted into a small rigid frame. An *uta* runs into its mold like quicksilver into a groove. In translation, only the thought survives; the poem no longer 'goes', any more than a watch goes if you take its works out of their casing and empty them upon a sheet of paper. (同)

Uta generally means a *waka*. Many if not most *waka* include a long serial thread of modification with one slight knot in the middle usually called a *pivot word*, though often a phrase, that allows what came before to morph into something else, thus squeezing in a surprise and additional information into the small poem. That single thread of modification can run all the way to the last word of the poem, the subject leaving no room whatsoever for a plot. Even if the order of our syntax were the same, doing that in English would require hyphen after hyphen for Japanese is agglutinative, while English is not. That largely explains this:

In the few examples I am about to give, the reader must for himself discover the possibility of poetry. If he is a poet, this will present no difficulty; just as a watch-maker would see in the scattered springs and wheels the possibility of a watch. (Waley 同)

We will not embarrass Waley with examples. Let me just say that Ivan Morris, in his foreword to his translation of *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams* (*Sarashina Nikki*), claims that Waley *demonstrated* “the peculiar resistance of Japanese classical poetry to translation” because his best Japanese poem translations were not up to his worst Chinese ones, and wonders whether the best solution might not be to simply avoid translating *uta*. I am not sure if even a poet can discover poetry in a language he cannot read which the translator could not re-create as a poem, but I can say that if Waley thought classical *waka* were categorically hard, he should have tried the most convoluted of them all, the *kyôka*!

Kyôka not only share the quicksilver-in-the-groove form of all *waka*, but have characteristics that make it hard for even the thought to survive translation. Let us see what three traits commonly ascribed to the genre mean for translation.

The first, *exceptionally imaginative content*, is, *in itself*, no problem, for paradox, hyperbole and most other comic rhetorical devices tend to translate well and the background or context for novel ideas can always be explained outside of the poem. The difficulty lies in the way long chains of logic are used to create the ideas in a manner which makes them witty rather than simply philosophical. What was said earlier about losing snappers in humorous prose is equally true for poems in translation. The more restrictive form makes it harder to get around, but the greater license given to poetry to use otherwise awkward grammar, and ellipsis makes it easier for the exceptionally creative translator.

The second, *word play*, is, in itself, a problem. Some is found in most *kyôka*, and much is found in many. It generally requires re-creation rather than translation, for, with mutually exotic languages, there is slim chance of a shared pun deriving from common homophones or shared ambiguity coming from the connotative spread of a key word. With nonsense verses, the reason may be determined by the *rhyme* (an unsung variety of pun) so a “translator” can simply change unimportant elements in the plot to fit whatever word-play he or she invents, but *kyôka* usually have a message, so there is a limit on our license. Moreover, the phonemic poverty of Japan makes it a punning superpower where even mediocre writers can out-pun master wordsmiths in English. There are *kyôka* (and *haikai*) that squeeze all the integers, ten fish, or more vegetables than most Usanians or English can even name into a single 31-syllabet poem. And they can do it so *gracefully*; you do not feel like groaning. Indeed, you might miss them all! In the words of the only native English speaker I know as well-published in his own Japanese as I am, Roger Pulvers, “*Whoever said that the pun is the lowest form of humor obviously didn’t speak Japanese.*” (*Corny corks add life to lingo, you elephant!* Japan Times: 2008/1/22)

The third is *parody* in the broadest sense of the word, including playing with an older *waka*, either because it asks for it, or simply because it is well known, *satire* addressing the characteristics, nominal or factual, of a historical figure, and less pointed allusions to sayings, hoary trope, etc.. To appreciate parody, you must know the parodied, which must also be translated. That would only be inconvenient – more explanation – were not *the linguistic gap between our languages so large the parody and the parodied may lose much if not most of their similarity in translation*. Moreover, some parodies are presented within stories because the original *waka* themselves were part, sometimes the main part, of a tale. I have introduced some such, but the only way to do them proper justice would be to do the entire tales. Again, note that while I say “parody” for lack of a broader term, in most cases, the play upon the original, which may change as little as one letter, might better be called a *mutation*, and if that sounds too random, too natural, the only suitable word I can think of would be a term I invented to describe poems that changed so much in translation that I was forced to admit I was creating something new, alternative to or taking off on the original *paraverses*. (*Variation* will not do for it concerns style & implies similar content).

In this book, for better or worse, I have had to grant myself a broader poetic license and do more of this *paraversing* than in any of my previous books (with a total of 8,000 translated poems) for it was the only way to translate the delightful soul of *kyôka*. In so far that this makes my poems differ more from the original than is usual with translation, one could say that I tend to create a *kyôka* of a *kyôka*. Thinking of this gave me my title, *Mad In Translation*, which, in *kyôka* style plays upon the title of a movie which I am sorry to say, I have yet to see: *Lost in Translation* (and, is this not a good example of the type of allusion often mistaken for parody?). Readers who fancy themselves to be traditionalists and are unfamiliar with my work, may be wary of a translator who confesses from the start that he will be literally unfaithful to the originals in order to be spiritually true. If you know my work, however, you know there is nothing to fear, for I always provide the original Japanese, a romanization, a word-by-word gloss and ample explanation (of which the numerous composite translations play a role) of what cannot be translated. This permits me to play without compunction and you, the reader, to see what is what and make your own judgment.

Needless to say, *kyôka* is not alone in being hard to translate. If another witty genre of poetry, classical *senryû*, has done better than *kyôka* – i.e., enjoyed considerable success in English translation – it is only because 17-syllabet humor requires a shorter sequence of improbable coincidences to be miraculously reborn in the target language than 31, and because it

plays with a more limited number of stereotypes which facilitate a more economical theme-by-theme explanation. With *kyôka*, the best examples tend to be totally off the wall. Few who are not Japanese can guess what they mean, much less reincarnate them in translation. And, to be frank, I have seen, even bought, entire books of translated Japanese poetry of types far less difficult to do that make me want to surreptitiously paste in a card with the following disclaimer before selling them to a second-hand book store, or returning them to the library:

This is a book of poems that, like the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz, are not merely dead but really most sincerely dead. These are poems in which even bookworms have lost interest. (Adapted from Roger M Knutson: *Flattened Fauna, A Field Guide to Common Animals of Roads, Streets, and Highways* (Ten Speed Press, 1987) which mentioned *animals* and *flies*.)

This is not to say that mad poems are the most difficult poetry to translate. Some are, indeed, *impossible* to translate – we shall see examples, too, for your author believes in sharing failure as well as triumph – but most *kyôka* *can* be done in one way or another. No, they are the *second* most difficult genre to translate. As single poems, they are easier to recreate than the wit weaving through *haikai* link-verse, where puns, allusions, parodies and other associations are not only carried from one part of a poem to another but from a previous poem or even leap-frogged from the one before that. I have seen some game efforts, but know of none (including my own tries), that do it full justice. *Kyôka* in translation may become popular in English, but *haikai* in translation will probably ever remain an academic exercise.

What Do We Want of Our Poets (*and editors*)?

歌よみは下手こそよけれ あめつちの動き出して たまるものかは 飯盛
uta-yomi wa heta koso yokere ametsuchi no ugoki-idashite tamaru mono ka wa meshimori
poem-composing-as-for lousy+emph., good heaven-earth(world) move-start put up w/!/? 1752-1830

*To my mind, bad poets are the ones to be preferred:
Who wants to see Heaven and the Earth disturbed?*

This naively facetious poem by 18-19c *kyôka*-master Yadoya no Meshimori may be the best known of all *kyôka* and the most translated. For comparison's sake, here are translations by Brownas and Thwaite: "Our poets had best / Be rather weak: / If heaven and earth / Began to move – / What a terrible mess!" Keene: "It's best for a poet / To be clumsy: / If heaven and earth / Started to move in sympathy, / Do you suppose we could stand it?" and Watson (in Shirane): "when it comes to poets / the clumsier the better / what a mess / if heaven and earth / really started to move." The poem has no pun and is not a parody. The wit is purely conceptual. Meshimori pretends to take at face-value the prefatory claims found in China's oldest poem anthology the *Shi-ching* 詩經 (also *Shijing*, 2-3,000 b.p.), and Japan's second major anthology of poetry, the *Kokinshû* (905), namely, that poetry could move heaven and earth. By "move," The ancient editors hardly meant poems could cause earthquakes, mud-slides or typhoons, but a child might so interpret it, as might a mad-poet. This is not to say Meshimori deserves a patent on the idea. It was already in the air. A poet in one of a thousand anecdotes found in the oft-reprinted *Laughs to Banish Sleep* by Anrakuan Sakuden first published in 1628 warns someone not to praise him too much for, according to the translator H. Mack Horton's note, *shrines and temples were believed to be liable to shake as a sign of the deities' favor*. And the foreword of a 1769 book of *kyôshi* (太平楽府), mad-poems in the Chinese style, lamented that the only thing moving heaven and earth in *that* day was Mr. Money. But most Japanese poets were intellectuals and most intellectuals in Japan were free-thinkers, which is to say they were brought up in the clear-headed rationalism of the Sinosphere, where religion was considered little more than superstition useful to keep the masses happy. You can bet they had their doubts about poem-power. Still, not all Japanese intellectuals were free-thinkers. There were nativists who believed in the magical efficacy of the sincerely expressed word based less on vague ancient notions of the power of poetry than newly coined claims of the unique soul-moving power of the divine Japanese tongue by classics scholar Motoori Norinaga. Since *waka* was the poetic vessel that carried that tongue across the centuries, any doubt expressed about the power of *waka* had to be put in a witty manner if the poet did not want to be considered an enemy of the nativist faith of Japaneseness. No one knew this better

than Meshimori, himself an active (two books published) national studies scholar, and it is unfortunate that the beautiful levity of his original is only weakly reflected by the comical *mess* and *disturbance* of our translations. Here is another version, a paraverse after Belloc, detail-wise far from the original but nonetheless closer in spirit because it is beyond doubt the most amusing, as your translator can himself read it over and over without wishing to change a word –

The Kokinshû Revisited

*They say a good song
can move heaven and earth;
I hope they're wrong!
But, just to be safe, my lad,
let us learn to love the bad.*

“Poor” would be better did it not also mean the opposite of wealthy. I settled for the second best, “bad.” Here is one of a handful of alternatives I came up with. You will note it keeps the creative translation, “mess,” but finds just the right phrase to describe the type of poet deemed safe:

*Nothing is better than being a poet, Sir, of little worth –
What a mess if our poems moved them, heaven & earth!*

But even humor does not disarm the true believer. Keene writes that the rabid nativist Hirata Atsune took umbrage with Meshimori. Chauvinists in all countries are fun to read because they are excitable, and excited people use great figures of speech. You should see the response of what would today be called the right-wing in Usania when the New York Historical Society sent out a survey on getting a Proper National Name – as *America* belonged to the continent and we lost the intended *Columbia* by courting too slow. They included virulent attacks on the character of the people to our South and natives (as the United States of Allegania was one of Washington Irving’s suggestions) not to mention outlandish claims that, as it turns out, have come true, namely, that we were so great that we were bound to take over the name and make it ours alone. As Hirata is the one who claimed foreigners visiting Japan rather than vice-versa proved they were mere limbs or members serving Japan the unmoving head of nations and wrote that the lascivious character – what we might call an overwhelming id – of Occidentals was confirmed by their thin shanks which proved they were akin to dogs!), his attack on this poem is probably worth introducing, but your translator is stuck in the sticks of Florida without access to a large library, so we must just imagine what it might be.

Pre-modern Japan and the Occident may not have agreed upon the power or lack of power of poetry. Poets in the West were indeed appreciated and feared for their ability to immortalize those they put into poems and, in some cultures and times, thought dangerous, as witches were, for the ability to literally curse someone, but *music* was more likely to be credited or attacked for affecting not only our mood but our character. Or, to summarize, poetry and music were usually discussed in different contexts. In Japan, the song *uta* and poem *waka* (lit. peaceful= Japanese-song) being the same, allow for the easy conflation of the semantic and the phonetic. Still, art-poets could and did write lyrics for songs in the West, so this difference was not absolute. Here is Trifaldi, a Countess who, as the keeper of a Princess in *Don Quixote*, was seduced into opening the way to her mistress by poems that moved her, about the business of poets:

“instead of composing Lamentable Verses . . . that make Women and Children cry by the Fireside, they try their utmost Skill on such soft Strokes as enter the Soul, and wound it, like that Thunder which hurts and consumes all within, yet leaves the Garment sound . . .” Moreover, *“Love-Madrigals and Roundelays . . . are no sooner heard, but they presently produce a Dancing of Souls, Tickling of Fancies, Emotions of Spirits, and, in short, a pleasing distemper in the whole Body, as if Quicksilver shook it in every Part. . . I pronounce these poets very dangerous, and fit to be banished to the Isles of Lizards.”* (Cervantes 1547-1616, Ozell’s revision of Peter Motteux’s translation).

Powerful stuff, indeed, but hardly so grandiose as the *Kokinshû* and *Book of Songs* 詩經 claim of *moving heaven and earth* that oddly seems more concrete in Meshimori’s denial of its desirability than in the original – for who would warn against an impossibility? Of course, we dramaticize. Not all the dangers were of a catastrophic scale. Judging by the poems in the *Manyôshû* most of the moving was of the petty variety: trying to shame clouds to stop blocking the view or rain to stop a lover from leaving *if they have any feelings*. The requests seem more on the nature of prayers than spells created by enchanting prosody. And, who knows ancient Japanese well enough to tell when the poet is or is not serious? In Song #17 of the *Manyôshû*, Princess Nukata no Ôkimi complains that clouds ought not so heartlessly block her view of Miwa mountain and the 反歌, or envoi, by an un-named woman is usually read to the effect that on that mountain even the clouds ought to care enough to behave. Is this intended to influence the clouds? *Who knows!* None of the annotations even *try* to explain what makes the repetitive envoi worth anthologizing. My first read glued on the side of the page decades ago, pretty much ignored the boring modern translations to turn the poet into a sarcastic Dorothy Parker:

*Sure clouds had hearts if but they knew
enough to never block my Lady's view!*

But the original, *Miwa-yama o shikamo kakusu ka . . .*, taken alone, is boring. A proper translation would be more like this:

*Miwa mountain? How could you block it from her view?
Aren't clouds of all things said to care? Don't block it if you do!*

Even added rhyme fails to save it. So where, then, *is* the wit? Is it not in the naive enthusiasm of the woman, who took her Princess's rhetorical chagrin at those "heartless clouds" seriously enough to lecture them? But, pardon the repetition: *who knows!* If clouds had hearts – and noble Japanese associated them with spirits of the dead as they were buried in mountain caves or cremated – *they* might think bad poetry funnier than good and listen to it. Japanese editors certainly appreciated bad poetry. Less than 80 poems later, we have a youth happy to have been granted a pretty bride by Emperor Ninji (#38) boasting: *I am the one, who won the cutie pie, the cutie pie / The one that every man would win, I won!* Or, using a direct translation of her name, an obvious moniker:

♪ Yasumiko Is Mine! ♪

*Easy-on-the-eyes, sweet Miss Easy-on-the-eyes! Surprise, surprise,
Aye, I'm the one, the one, who won Miss Easy-on-the-eyes!*

われはもや安見見得たり 皆人の得難にすといふ安見得たり 万葉集
ware wa mo ya yasumiko etari minahito no egata ni su to iu yasumi etari mys #95
i-as-for already+emph yasumiko got/earned all-people get-difficult said yasumi got

This fulsome boast (unleavened by my *surprise, surprise & Aye, I*) is the first & perhaps last poem in the 4,516-poem *Manyôshû* (8c) composed by a youth who is either a dunce or a six year-old at heart – one has a sneaking suspicion the girl was as stupid or oblivious as the boy and the Emperor was doing a favor to all concerned. Be that as it may, reading the *Manyôshû* made me realize for the first time that variety makes an anthology interesting. A book with nothing but perfect poems is like a movie with nothing but beauties: pretty boring. But this chapter is not about bad poems. It is about the alleged *affect* of poems.

The first *waka* that obviously could be called a *kyôka* follows shortly after a *kayô*, or truly sung poem in a narrative in book 14 of the *Nihonshôki* (c.720). That sung poem, or song, is 7-syllabets too long to be a *kyôka*, but itself somewhat comic. First, *the story*: A carpenter named Inabe-no-mane, finishing lumber set on a stone with an axe, was observed by the

dangerously mercurial Emperor Yûryaku (r. 457-89), who thought it odd and questioned him as to whether he ever missed and hurt his tool, to which Inabe replied curtly “*Never.*” The Emperor, evidently upset by his confidence, called some young women and had them strip down to their thong-like loincloths and put on an exhibition of sumo in front of the carpenters. Sure enough, Inabe eventually missed and nicked his blade. The triumphant (?) Emperor, saying ‘*That’s what you get for speaking irresponsibly!*’ ordered him taken to a field and executed. At this point, his fellow carpenters, or one of them, maybe, sang out –

あたらしき伊名部の工匠 懸けし墨縄 其が無けば 誰か懸けむよ あたら墨縄
 atarashiki inabe no takumi kakeshi suminawa shi ga nakeba tare ka kakemu yo atara suminawa
 pitiful inabe-the carpenter stretchng ink-strng/cords he not-if who? stretch! pitiful ink-string

*Alas, for poor
 Inabe the carpenter
 & the ink-string he stretched!*
*When he is no more,
 Who is going to stretch it,
 That poor ink-string?*

Lamenting for the ink-string – an elegant device used in the Sinosphere to mark lumber for cutting or foundations for digging that a skilled craftsman can pull-back and twang at an angle to instantly do what Occidental architects require cloud-edge rulers for! – seems a mad strategy, but *it worked*. Maybe the relationship of carpenter and tool reminded the cruel Emperor Yûryaku of his own fanatical love for his hunting hawks or something, for he suddenly regretted aloud the possible loss of a skilled craftsman and sent a reprieve that arrived just in the nick of time. When that news came back the Emperor sang out –

ぬば玉の 甲斐の黒駒 鞍着せば 命死なまし 甲斐の黒駒 雄略天皇
 nubatama no kai no kurokoma kura kiseba inochi shinamashi kai no kurokoma
 blackbead/gem’s kai’s blackcolt saddled-if life died-wouldhave kai’s blackcolt

*Black as a berry,
 the black colt from Kai!*
*Had we saddled him,
 a man would have died,
 The black colt from Kai!*

The translation is Edwin Cranston’s, except for centering, one de-hyphenating, some de/capping and my revision of the penultimate line: “*Someone’s life would have been lost*” (Waka 1). How could one give up

the opportunity for a *rhyme* to go with the Learical repeat found in the original! Note how the *thing* (a horse is living, at least)-*centered* manner in which the relief is expressed matches that of the poem triggering the Emperor's remorse, and how wit is born in the artless way the just-in-time reprieve is alluded to rather than spelled out. There is also no little irony in a poem by *this* Emperor being considered as a candidate for the first recorded *kyôka*, or 31-syllabet mad poem (the initial ink-string poem is a song, a bit longer than a *kyôka*) because he was so erratic and oddly heartless some historians believe he was literally out of his mind, or, dare I say it . . . *mad*! Still, it would be centuries before the *Kokinshû* (905) preface would Japanese the idea of *uta* songs/poems moving heaven and earth, not to mention the hearts of even the most hardened warriors. Perhaps the best known example of such would be a long poem in the *Record of Ancient Matters* (c.712), where a woman about to be executed for missing a leaf that fell into the wine she served the Emperor saved herself with a poem tying together the kingdom from the roots of the tree to the leaf. And, guess what? That emperor was . . . the very same Yûryaku who almost killed the carpenter. One almost feels that poetry needed a mad man to prove its value for moving people and saving lives!

目にみえぬ鬼神をたにおとすへし かへの耳をはなにかおそれん 実隆
me ni mienu oni kami o dani otosubeshi kabe no mimi o ba nani ga osoren sanetaka
 eyes-by see-cnt demns gds+acc evn knock-down-ought, wall's ears+emph what fear-to

*Songs beat gods and demons even though we cannot see them;
 Why should we fear what a 'wall with ears' might hear, then?*

Call the poem false bravado if you wish. Your translator prefers to read it as a statement of poetic freedom. The Jesuits, reaching Japan in the 1540's, described men more gutsy than any met elsewhere in the world. And, more individualistic, as could be seen in the diversity of their facial hair as opposed to the conventionally limited patterns of the Europeans. *Kyôka*, more than any other form of Japanese poetry, manifested those strong personalities. Sanjônishi Sanetaka (1455-1537), advisor to three emperors despite a low (but still noble) ranking, was the leading *waka* master – even passed a decade-long apprenticeship to gain the sacred secrets of the *Kokinshû* from Sôgi – tea expert and incense expert of his time. He was, in other words, Mr. Culture of war-torn Japan. True, like many nobles, including the Emperor whom, Keene notes, hung out his calligraphy to sell for cash, he had to work to make a living, and work almost always means compromise; but Japan was a tolerant society, so he could be his own man at heart. The above poem from his song diary 再昌草(1536) boldly exaggerates a saying 歌には鬼神も納受ある that sums up the *Kokinshû* preface's claim that *waka* can influence demons & gods. It

followed two poems by others, written for the theme *white wall* (good for graffiti?), urging us not to put people down in poems *because walls have ears* (a well-known proverb) and *we all have faults* (a visual pun: compare *fault* = 癖 to 壁 = *wall*). As to whether Sanetaka and others really believed in the supernatural power of poems, your translator cannot say.

わが恋は深草ならぬ浅草へ通ひつめたる少々の金 寝ものがたり kyôka dict
 waga koi wa fukakusa naranu asakusa e tôitsumetaru shôshô no kane anon samurai
 my love-as-for deepgrass is-not shallow-grass-into go/pass push-a-little-money

*My love is not Tall but Short-grass and I can say
 If I had it, a little money would go a long way!*

~~~~~  
*Unlike the love of Major Deepgrass, mine's a minor thing:  
 Just 2 bits and Shortgrass Shrine will grant my petitioning*

Major or Captain or whatever you would make “few/little-general” (少将, a title punned into the “*a bit of* 少々”) Fukakusa, tried to bed the poetess Ono no Komachi, who supposedly promised him something on his 100<sup>th</sup> visit and sadly froze to death on his 99<sup>th</sup> visit – for more details, read *The Woman Without a Hole* (2007). His name means “deep-grass,” while the district that the poet – or samurai character in the comic story-book “*Sleepy Tales*” – wanted to visit, Asakusa means “shallow-grass.” Upon being refused the loan of enough cash to visit a shrine and thank or supplicate the gods for something, he wrote the above poem and the head clerk was so impressed he gave him what he needed and wouldn’t even take an IOU. Now, that is a little thing and a hopeless poem to translate, but a fine example of what was probably the most common informal use of a poem: to move people. In the original, it is clever, with a literary allusion coupled with love for a place. We can imagine that if this really happened, the clerk would take the poem, frame it and hang it on the wall. So we do not so much have magic as a perfectly understandable exchange. In any country, wit, especially fixed inside a poem in a manner that does not demand an explanation (all literate Japanese would have gotten the above poem at a glance) is worth something for those who appreciate it.

~~~~~  
 Excluding love poems, poems meant to influence were more commonly directed toward the elements in the micro and the macro-cosmos than the mind of the reader. We will see examples of each, respectively, a pun-powered fire-stopper so famous it was printed up and sold as charms for houses, and a piteous appeal for milk that might not have seen the light of day were it not by the most famous of all kyôka-master’s, Shokusanjin.



焼亡がかきの本まで来たれどもあかしと云へばここに火とまる 白隠
 jômô ga kaki no moto made kitaredomo akashi to ieba koko ni hi tomaru hakuin d.1768
 burn-death/fire-the fence's-base (=poet's name)-up-to came-if-even red/proof/light (of
 dawn & toponym in his famus poem) said-if here-at/by fire-stops=hitomaru (poet's name)

*Though conflagration licks your fence and sparks persimmon spit
 high into the sky, his name may Fire Stop – Hitomaru, to wit.*

*Though conflagration licked the Kaki fence, dawn brings proof
 This is where the fire stopped – Hitomaru saved our roof.*

*Though flames may lick this Kakinomoto, dawn bring proof
 That this is where the fire stops – Hitomaru save our roof!*

The name puns split, surname in the first part, personal name in the second. Zen Monk Hakuin put the poem by a picture of *waka* “god” Kakinomoto Hitomaro (fl. c.680-700) drawn *with* letters spelling Hitomaro’s best-known poem that Hakuin’s contemporaries used *for an alarm clock* (read half at night so you wake up on time to finish it, or, perhaps, you finish it so it will gratefully awaken you the next time you use it, too). A boat disappears in the morning fog off Akashi, which in Hakuin’s Fire Charm *kyôka* has three homophonic pun possibilities (red/light/proof 又、かきのもとまでが、足の元の掛けであかし?). The Kaki in his family name,

written 柿, or *persimmon*, puns as a *fence* or wall and Kakinomoto the base of said fence. Hitomaro is familiarly Hitomaru, which puns as *fire+hi+tomaru=stops*. While the original seems to start in the past, the past can be a sort of subjunctive and, as it ends in the present, this, too, might do:

火 KAKINO MOTO HITOMARU 止

*Though all beyond this fence is left in ashes and the flame
red as persimmon, the fire will stop if you read his name!*

Most of the poem is borrowed from a poem by another Zen monk, whom, if I recall correctly, the more famous Hakuin knew, Hannyabô. The shared words are not as obvious in my translation but:

わが宿の牆のもとまで焼け来るを般若棒にて打てば火とまる 般若坊 般若房宗熙
waga yado no kaki no moto made yake-kuru o hannyaku bâ nite uteba hi tomaru hannyabô
my dwelling's fence/wall's base-up-to burning-come, hannya stick/pole-as hit-if/when fire-stops

火 KAKINO MOTO HITOMARU 止

*When the flames reach the base of the wall of my dwelling
Hanya thumps his staff and, lo, the fire stops, no telling!*

Hannya punning his “monk” suffix *bô* into a staff is clever and his name meaning *prajna* also has power, but such detail works against the poem as a charm. Hakuin’s poem is more successfully general as the additional detail (*akashi*) concerns the ancient poet and not himself. In retrospect, the idea of making the name of the great ancient poet a fire-stopping charm, seems so natural I would not be surprised to find prior folk usages.

~~~~~  
舌つゞみうつほどたと出ずともちゝとなりともちゝ出よかし 蜀山人 家集  
shita tsuzumi utsu hodo tanto idezu tomo chichi to nari to mo chichi ideyokashi shokusanjin  
tongue-drum hit amount alot come-out-not even wee-bit become even milk come-out! late-18c

*Though far from a feast for smacking lips and clicking tongue,  
A breast is a breast & milk should come out: at least some!*

~~~~~  
*Though it fails to stop his thirsty tongue’s dry click,
A bosom so milky should at least have a lick!*

The first-man of Tenmei *kyôka*, Shokusanjin is not mad – as Issa was with a dry wet-nurse (pg 140) – just sad, for the malfunctioning breasts

belonged to his wife. A member of the lowest echelon of samurai, and still young, he could not afford to hire a wet-nurse and his baby died before the year was out. The poem might be called a lament, but as it seems to have been written while his child was still alive, it was probably intended more as a charm. The female breast, or *tits* in the broad sense of the word, are called *chichi* as is *milk*, so Shokusanjin uses traditional Japanese shaming rhetoric: *you should at least live up to your name*. I say charm, or spell, because the poem seems to address an object not a person. Shokusanjin was probably a free-thinker, but even rational people cannot help hoping against hope that the right words have a magical affect. This poem surfaced in *Edo Kyôka*, the only general book of *kyôka* other than the *Kyôka Dictionary* and *Mad In Translation*. Nada Inada, the psychiatrist author, did not know that distraught as Shokusanjin was, he still had the presence of mind to play with older poems to bring allusive wit into his charm: see the dandelion poems in the *Mad Exchange* chapter (p.202).

千金の名だかき月の雲間よりせめて一二分もれ出よかし 四方赤良
sen kin no nadataki tsuki no kumoma yori semete ichi ni bun mori-ideyokashi akara
 thousand gold's name-exalted moon clouds-between-from at-least one or two pennies leak out!

*"The million pound Moon" they say and when you think of it
 Cloud Banks with silver linings should at least spit out a bit!*

~~~~~  
*A cloud bank hides the million dollar moon, good grief,  
 Spare us at least a shiny quarter if you are not deaf!*

Again we have "living up to the name" rhetoric – a charming strategy fitting what Ruth Benedict called a "Shame Culture" or, if you feel her contrast was too shallow, how about *laying a guilt trip on the under-performing party by reminding them of what they are supposed to be?*

よし曇れ曇れば月の名を立たんわが身一人の秋の空かは 三国伝記  
*yoshi kumore kumoreba tsuki no na o tatan waga mi hitori no aki no sora ka wa* 15c  
 ok, cloud-over, cloud-over-if moon's name+acc stand/spotlight-will my self alone's fall sky?

*OK, cloud-over! And when you do, you'll also cloud your name  
 "The moon who only cared about herself" will take the blame.*

~~~~~  
*Cloud-over, then! Cloud, and take the blame! Listen, for soon
 "The moon who kept the fall sky for herself" will be the tune!*

If Shokusanjin's poem was a subtle shamer, this is a clear one. And, the very day your translator added the above to this chapter, the morning news mentioned the daughters of farmers in West India out plowing the fields naked in order to shame the gods – or tutelary deity? – into raining and

ending the long drought! Years ago, I recall reading of a Turkish custom where a man dressed like a woman and rode a mule backwards for the same reason. Compared to these actions, a poem seems a boring way to appeal but this one had extra life in it not found in such quaint customs. Rightly or wrongly, it was also interpreted as a complaint against a woman using her menses/moon as an excuse to refuse intercourse, and, if *that* were not enough, in the sixth story in Anraku Sakuden's thousand-plus story book *Laughs to Banish Sleep* 醒睡笑 1623, it is turned into a homosexual parody:

よしすばれすばらば若衆名や立たん我が身ひとりのすきならばこそ
yoshi subare subaraba wakashu na ya tatan waga mi hitori no suki naraba koso
 ok pucker, puckered-if wakashu (gay) name+emph live-up-to-not myself only's crack is-if!

*Then, pucker! Be a tight-ass and keep thy gay reputation
 Thy crack is, after all thine, and thou thy self can ration!*

The verb for keeping a tight sphincter, *subaru*, is identified with the closely clustered Subaru-za, the Pleiades, thus keeping the firmament in the original present in the “young-crowd” or gay youth's fundament, while the idea of selfish behavior is reworded as following “one's own likes” because *liking* is *suki* and that is a homophone for a *crack*! *Subari wakashu* were highly desired by the largely bisexual 17c samurai, who found the stylish teasers tantalizing. Not having read the story in *Laughs to Banish Sleep*, your translator cannot say whether the poem moved the youth or not, but the tight ass, while a complaint was also praise. (If any reader finds this gross, go read “our” Martial's *Epigrams* for comparison.)

~~~~~  
 The above examples of moving or would-be moving songs, whether addressed to the macro or a micro-cosmos, are all similar in that they are *aimed at* influencing a mind or a thing. I have only read one poem where the effect is not called for by the poet. That is to say, inadvertent poem power, unintended and not mentioned in the poem itself. This is it:

奥山に枝折る枝折は誰がためぞ我が身を分けて産める子のため 月刈藻集  
*okuyama ni eda oru eda-ori wa daga tame zo waga mi o wakete umeru ko no tame*  
 deep/recessed mountain/s-in branch-bending-as4 whose sake+emph  
 my self+acc. splitting, bear/born-child's sake - anon

*Deep in the hills, for whom do I break twigs, for whom? I dare  
 say for you, the child for whom I parted my body to bear!*

The *parting* mimics the usual expression for making a way in the wild or climbing a mountain which for farmers who filled the valleys was the

same thing (Japanese do not *blaze* trails, they *split* them). Read by itself, I would only think this a *kyôka* because it is an unconventional theme for a *waka*. But I found it in the *Kyôka Appreciation Dictionary*, which gives the original source, which from its name, the moon-mowing seaweed collection sounds sort of mad. It attracted the editor for being a good just-so story for Fuji's (snow-covered) crest being called a salty (bright white) butt, or *shiojiri* (as early as the *Tale of Ise*). Namely, it could be a corruption of *shi-ori*, or *branch-breaking/folding for the sake of marking a trail*, and that could have come from a story of a man who, in an age where a death at home ruined that dwelling forever, so he accompanied his old mother up the mountain to leave her to die, and noticing she was breaking – and, it goes without saying, leaving hanging – branches, thought she was planning to sneak back down. So, he removed these markers as he went. When she finally noticed that, she sang the above poem to herself, and as she finished, the earth opened up and the man plunged to his death. Here, one cannot imagine the mother wanted her son to die, but it is true, nothing hurts like those who we thought knew us not interpreting our words or deeds with good faith. And the poem evidently transmitted that pain to the gods who in an extraordinary act of metaphysical poetic justice cancelled the bad son's birth by returning him to the original womb. Ignominious thoughts have consequences.

~~~~~

This chapter is unique for the poems come almost completely from sources other than the *Kyôka Taikan*, or *Broadview*, from which most of the poems in the rest of the book come from. That is probably because the *Broadview* does not, for the most part, include stories and most literally moving poems move the reader best within a narrative.

~~~~~

♪ Meshimori's Better-bad-poets *kyôka* translations by Geoffrey Brownas and Anthony Thwaite in their *Penguin Book of Japanese Verse* and Burton Watson in *Shirane*: 2002

♪ Emperor Yûryaku. Yes, the first poem in the *Manyôshû*, the *Pretty basket, pretty scoop* pick-up a maiden on herb-gathering day song, is also his.

♪ *Poetry needed a mad man*. As David needed Saul to prove the calming power of song.

♪ A coincidence in the cloud-chastising *waka*. The fourth cluster of Chinese characters: 情有南畝 (*kokoro aranamu* = ought to have feelings") includes Ôta Nanpo's Nanpo 南畝!

♪ Cranston's *Waka 1 (The Gem Glistening Cup)*. A valuable selection invaluable for the way the poems and poets in the 8c *Manyôshû* are thoroughly related.

♪ *Laughs to Banish Sleep* is H. Mack Horton's translation of about 3% of Sakuden's 醒睡笑. Literally it is "wake-sleep-laughs" or "stimulate-drowsiness-laugh."

♪ The *Kyôka Appreciation Dictionary* by Suzuki Tôzô, obtained too late for the first edition reading copy of the 740-page *Monster*: 狂歌鑑賞辞典 鈴木棠三 角川書店 1984.

# Mad Reason: *Hyperlogical* Means Going All the Way

念仏を強ひて申すもいらぬもの もし極楽を通り過ぎては 桃水和尚  
*nenbutsu o shiite môsu mo iranu mono moshi gokuraku o tôri-sugitte wa* monk tôsui  
prayers+acc forcing-say+emph unneeded thing, if paradise+dat pass-by-as-for d.1683

念仏に明け暮れるうつけを嘲笑して

Making light of blockheads who pray day and night.

*With prayers, pushing it too much may prove unwise  
I'd take care if I were you not to overshoot Paradise!*

~~~~~  
*'Tain't wise to overdo your prayers, for you might die,
And waking, find you passed it, Paradise, right by!*

~~~~~  
*Overdoing your prayers, my friend, is a bad habit  
You might miss Paradise, just shoot right past it!*

Taken literally, religion is a blast, *a magazine* – in the old meaning of the word – full of ammunition for humor. Popular Buddhism, like Catholicism, stereotypically prospered by providing people with concrete ideas of Paradise and the itinerary taken to get there, then charging them and their surviving family hefty fees for safe-passage. The *kyôka* is not about indulgences per se, but the frame of mind in which they thrive. Though not by Ikkyû, this is the sort of witty free-thinking rationalism usually identified with the poems of a certain famous wise-guy Zen Monk.

この世にて慈悲も悪事もせぬ人は さぞや閻魔もこまりたまわん 一休  
*kono yo nite jihi mo akuji mo senu hito wa sazo ya enma mo komari tamawan ikkyû*  
this year/times-as-for mercy-and bad-things do not person-as-for yep, yama even troubled

*There are people in this world, who do ne'er good nor bad.  
Yama, Judge of Hades, they must drive that Devil mad!*

~~~~~  
*In this world, those who do neither good deeds nor evil,
How they must bedevil the Ruler of Hades!*

From a Zen Q&A series attributed to Ikkyû (d.1481) and link-verse master and fellow in Zen, Chikamasa 親当(蜷川新右衛門 d.1448), this is pure fun at the expense of popular Buddhist belief. Emma (Yama) the King of Hades, a muscular demon who looks terrifying as he is red from drinking molten metal to punish himself for inflicting punishment though he does it for justice, is really a kind soul. He uses a large magnifying glass to diligently search out every merciful or cruel thing new arrivals did and charges his

lackeys to mete out the fair – and, as depicted by Japanese artists, extremely creative – punishment. Ikkyû's concern for this tragic King of the Underworld is touching. The poem before it, by Chikamasa is a splendid description of how belief affects people and, therefore, fiction or not, is useful:

極楽や地獄があるとだまされてよろこぶ人におじる人々 親当
 gokuraku ya jigoku ga aru to damasarete yorokobu hito ojiru hitobito
 'paradise and hell are/exist' so fooled, rejoice/ing people fear/ing people

*Fooled into believing Heaven and Hell are not fake
 Some people rejoice and some people quake*

~~~~~  
*Fooled into thinking that Heaven and Hell exist,  
 Some find fear on earth, others only bliss.*

Still, it is not a *mad poem* but a “road poem” (*dôka* 導歌) or homily. Ikkyû's chuckling envoi *is*. The first great anthology of *kyôka* 古今夷曲集 (1666) has a poem expanding Ikkyû's ring of sympathy for Hell's fiction:

みな人のもし成仏をするならば 地獄の鬼やかつへ死なまし 行好  
 minabito no moshi seibutsu o suru naraba jigoku no oni ya katsueji namashi kôkô  
 all peopl+emph becme-bddha/enlightnd-becom-if hell's demons+emph starvedeath wuld

*If everyone were to become buddhas with their last breath  
 Wouldn't the poor devils in Hades slowly starve to death?*

This *is* mad. Demons may only do their duty punishing sinners, but the way they are depicted by popular artwork fiendishly flaying, chopping up skewering, stewing or roasting sinners hardly evokes compassion. Ikkyû's kind words would seem to have started a game of altruistic one-upmanship escalating a *kyôka* at a time! In another anthology thirteen years later,

ねがはくは我後の世は鬼となりて 地獄におつる人をたすけむ 藤原貞因  
 negawakuba waga ato no yo wa oni to narite jigoku ni otsuru hito o tasukemu tein 1679  
 wish-could-if my aftr/nxt wrld-as4 demon-to becmng hell-into falling people+acc help-wld

*This is my wish: to turn into a demon in the next world,  
 So I can save lost souls in hell where they are hurled.*

~~~~~  
*My wish, this: that in the next world I can be a devil,
 Born in hell to help the many fallen ones be well.*

That is madder than concern for the employment of demons, for it amounts to wanting to help those getting what was coming to them (出典：銀葉夷歌集). Returning to the older Zen Q&A . Ikkyû goes first:

死んでから 仏というもなにゆえぞ / 小言もいわず邪魔にならねば 一休
shinde kara hotoke to iu mo nani yue zo kogoto mo iwazu jama ni naraneba ikkyû
 die-from buddha say/call+emph what reason+exclam complaint say-not & bother be-not-if

*Why do they call us buddhas after we die? I cannot say,
 Unless it's because none complain or get in the way.*

~~~~~  
*So, why is it that they call us a saint after we die?  
 You don't complain or get in the way, that's why!*

The deceased are called *hotoke*, or “buddhas,” to this day; Ikkyû in this *just-so* poem pretends to tell us why. In the vernacular, a Buddha is *an extremely considerate person*, in English idiom, a *saint*. As with the last exchange, Ikkyû gives us wit, Chikamasa wisdom:

死んでから仏になるはいらぬもの 活きたるうちによき人となれ 親当  
*shinde kara hotoke ni naru wa iranu mono ikitaru uchi ni yoki hito to nare chikamasa*  
 die-from buddha say/call+emph what reason+exclam complaint say-not & bother be-not-if

*Becoming a saint after you die is too slow for a trick;  
 Become a good person while still among the quick!*

~~~~~  
*Anyone can become a good soul after they have died
 What you would become, become when you're alive!*

Read alone this might seem a mere homily, but it is a witty complement for Ikkyû's poem. The Q&A goes on. The next is one of Ikkyû's best –

極楽は十万億土はるかなり / とてもゆかれぬわらじ一足 一休
gokuraku wa jûmanokudo haruka nari totemo yukarenu waraji issoku ikkyû
 paradise-as-for 100,000x100,000 lands distant is, at-all go-cannot sandals 1-pair

*Paradise lies a million leagues yonder – that's far away
 Fat chance you'll make it, with one pair of straw sandals!*

~~~~~  
*Paradise lies a trillion countries over – even a gambler  
 Would say 'no dice', with but one pair of straw sandals!*

The macramé sandals worn by travelers that corpses were shod with were expected to last but one day. Another simple conceptual masterpiece:

歳々に悪魔外道のながさるる / その西方にゆきたくもなし 親当  
*toshidoshi ni akuma gaidô no nagasaruru sono nishikata ni yukitaku mo nashi*  
 year-year-in/by demon/s outer-road flow/go, this westward go-want-not! chikamasa

*Year after year, that is where those bad men find fraternity;  
 'Go West, old man!' they say, but it's no place I would be!*

This is by Chikamasa, not Ikkyû. Does he allude to sects of Buddhism that claim bad men are more easily saved than good? If so, this is a marvelous *kyôka*, well worth the translator's extra effort to specify the location ('Go West, old man!') of the Pure Land in a witty manner. And, now, we are done with Ikkyû and Chikamasa but not from free-thinking about religion.

ねさめにも思ひ出して床しきは 彼極楽を恋の病か 正恵 銀葉夷歌集  
 nezame ni mo omoidashite tokoshiki wa ano gokuraku o koi no yamai ka shôe 1679  
 waking-up-while-even thinking-of bed-as-for that paradise+acc love/longing disease?

*So you awaken thinking of it as you lie alone in bed –  
 Could paradise, like being lovesick, be all in the head!*

Despite the beauty of the idea, the equation of a condition with a place (eg. *Does that make paradise a type of love-sickness?*) would be too direct. "All in the head," a child of rhyme and reason, repairs that, making the poem stylistically better in translation than in the 17c original.

極楽も地獄も活て居るうちぞ 死ての後は何か有べし 空翠 茶全集 3-43  
 gokuraku mo jigoku mo ikiteiru uchi zo shinde no ato wa nani ga arubeshi kûsûi d.1763  
 paradise/heaven & hell too living-are during! // dying-after-as-for what? is-ought

*Heaven or hell, one thing is true:  
 You cannot take them with you!*

Issa copied this *kyôka* from the five-foot long grave-marker of Kûsûi, an Edo (蔵前) *haijin* and sign-maker, into his journal, where the translator found it. Since Issa was not a Zen monk but a member of a sect whose very name, Pure Land, affirms a belief in the afterworld, it would be curious to know what he felt about the poem he so graciously passed on to us. Yes, the poem shrank in translation, but my longer attempts seemed dead by comparison. In the original, it is more homily than *kyôka*, but the second line of the above reading makes it mad in translation. Unfortunately, our run of readings showing a net gain in translation is over. The next, a masterpiece by monk Sengai (1750-1837), demonstrates a huge loss in translation.

屁なりともあだなるものと思ふなよ ブツといふ字は佛なりけり 仙崖  
 he nari to mo ada naru mono to omou na yo butsu to iu ji wa hotoke narikeri sengai  
 fart is even vain/worthless thing-as think-not! butsu-as said letters-as-for buddha are!

*Mu is Bu and Bu is Mu*

*Who says a fart is but empty air! Cut one & it goes  
 "Butsu!" – If that is not our Buddha, who knows!*

*The original wit* depends on the unEnglishable fusion of an unfamiliar name (*Butsu* for Buddha) and unmatchable onomatopoeia (*butsu* the sound of a fart's release). You might note that most of the poets in this chapter are Zen Buddhist monks. Free-thinking, a term common in English up to the mid-20c, was often used as a synonym for atheism, but actually it meant being open-minded and unafraid to think logically about what others take on faith (not just religion but capitalism, libertarianism, marxism, etc.). Deists such as the rhyming pair of Paine and Twain are good examples. It is also the term used by the Russian Captain Golownin to describe the intellectual Japanese he met and talked with during his early-19c captivity in Japan and might describe the majority of intellectuals throughout the Sinosphere with its deep-rooted Confucian rationalism and the Taoist or Zen tradition of open and honest unknowing that harmonizes with it and, for that matter, the humble way of science. Only 11 of the 1061 poems in the seminal 1666 "Savage Song" anthology of *kyôka*, are by Ikkyû (vs. 63 by Mitoku, 52 by Teitoku, 32 by Yûchôrô, etc.), but that is partly because his poems could be found elsewhere. The role of Zen Buddhism in haiku has been exaggerated by some, but it would be hard to exaggerate its contribution to *kyôka* as the poetry of free-thinkers. Later, in the mid-18c, *kyôka* was joined by another genre of comic poetry that took pride in free-thinking even as it, for the most part built rather than deconstructed stereotypes, *senryû*.

お釈迦さま生れ落るとみそをあげ 俳風柳多留拾遺 四  
*oshaka-sama umare-ochiru to miso o age* (a *senryû* pre.1801)  
 shakamuni(buddha's name)+hon. born-drop and boast-raises/says

*Buddha's birth*  
*He was already boasting*  
*as he came out!*

*Shaka's the most:*  
*As soon as he was born, out*  
*pops a big boast!*

*Shakamuni fell*  
*from his mother already*  
*talking himself up*

In just 17-mora, this unheralded *senryû* does what takes Twain a chapter in *Letters to the Earth*. It goes to the heart of what makes gentle, rational folk wary about organized religion: the character of their gods. Most cultures in the Far East admire modesty so much they even expect it even from leaders. For a newly born babe to pop out crowing, "*Above and below Heaven I alone am precious* (or command respect) 天上天下唯我独尊!" is preposterous. Still, egoism is excusable in a baby. When adult Gods do it, one wonders about the character of those who created them and the judgment of those who continue to believe in them.



Because religious fictions provide clear-cut targets, religion-related poems are ideal for demonstrating the working of pure logic; but do not think that hyperlogical *kyôka* are all, or even mostly concerned with supernatural matters. The rest of the chapter will, with one exception, treat the mundane matters representing by far the larger part of *kyôka* free-thinking.

借錢も 病もちくとある物をもものため身と誰かいふらん 松永貞徳  
*shakkin mo yamai mo chiku to aru mono o mono no motanu mi to dare ga iu ran*  
 debt/s & disease carry-round so have/ things+contrad.interrog. things have-not-body-as who says! 1570-1653

*Debt and Disease*  
*Would you call them Nothing!*  
*Who has the gall*

*To call me and my kind*  
*The Have-nots of the World?*

*Though we never*  
*run short of disease and own*  
*mountains of debt*

*We're called have-nots & that*  
*is the craziest thing yet!*

The heart of Teitoku's *kyôka* is not only translatable but improvable, as English happens to have a word, "have-nots," better than the original, which is a bit lengthier (*mono no motanu mi*). Indeed, if Japanese had a word as compact as the English one, this poem might have become famous. Teitoku's reasoning recalls Lightning Slim's line "if it weren't for bad luck, I wouldn't have no luck at all!" The original has neither pronoun nor conjugation to reveal person or number. English wants such detail so the translator chose the first-person singular and plural as well as one second person address. Why? Teitoku was never poor, but he was compassionate and that is conveyed better through the first person than the third.

(まづしき人のしたしきにもうとまれければよみてつかはしける)  
 軒近き隣にだにもとはれねば 貧ほど深き隠家はなし 無銭法師 1636  
*noki chikaki tonari ni dani mo towareneba bin hodo fukaki kakureya wa nashi musen*  
 eaves-close neighbors'-by even call-not-if poverty as-much deeply hidden house-as-for not

*Even neighbors*  
*you know no longer knock*  
*upon your door*

*No hermitage hides you*  
*like simply being poor.*

*Even neighbors*  
*take great care to pretend*  
*you are not there*

*No hermit lives so deep*  
*in the hills as poverty.*

If the second half of this *kyôka* by a contemporary of Teitoku whose name, Musen-hôshi means the Penniless Priest or Moneyless Monk, is not an aphorism already, it should be. The *deeply* hidden poverty's *hidden* pivots from being an adverb to an adjective modifying *house*. Otherwise, there is no word-play and the wit lies solely in the comparison of a concrete, or

rather, clay and wood object and the more abstract condition of poverty, and simultaneous to that, the jump from psychological to spatial distance. Together, that suffices to make the poem a hyperlogical *kyôka*.

When you are *down*, brother, you are . . . *out*.

*Even old neighbors never call when poverty comes to stay  
No mountain retreat keeps the world half so far away!*

This poem, not at all famous, *should have* become a saying. These readings, albeit in the wrong language, are dedicated to that end.

祖父祖母ひうばひ祖父こと／＼く 死なずに居ては何をくはせん 雄長老  
ôji uba soji hiuba hiôji kotogotoku shinazu ni ite wa nani o kuwasen yûchôrô 16c  
grndpa grndma grt-grma grt-gpa evrybdy die-not-w/ being-as4 what+acc feed-let-not

*Grandma, Grandpa, Great-grandma Great-grandpa, if every one  
not dying, stayed, we're beat: What the hell would we then eat!*

~~~~~  
*Grandma, Grandpa, Great-grandma, Great-grandpa – say ‘when’!
If no one died but stayed alive, what would remain to feed them?*

The original is plain. A prefatory note mentions having a hard time keeping his mother, but I cannot help wondering if there was a play about life-extension, or, observing the unification of Japan, Yûchôrô (1547-1602), guessed that after centuries of feudal warfare, peace was around the corner and threatened to burden families with superfluous members. An anon. poem in the great 1666 *Savage* anthology suggests it happened quickly:

子どもをは鮓にする程持たれど いひががなければひぼしにぞする
kodomo o ba sushi ni suru hodo mochitaredo ihi ga nakereba hiboshi ni suru anon
children+emph. sushi-into make amount have but rice not-if sun-dried into make

貧しき人の子おほくもたるをみて よみ人しらす
On seeing poor people with many children

*They have kids enough to make sushi and still are not done?
When rice runs out, they may need to cure them in the sun!*

~~~~~  
*Not to kid, but they have enough of them to make sushi!  
Or, lacking rice, sun-dried might do, though I like juicy!*

“Juicy” is born of rhyme, alone. The idiom has a “packed like a sardines” feeling. Rice was used to ferment the old-style *sushi*, which was often slept on for the warmth and pressure. Poor people often had little if any rice, but provided they had some access to sunlight . . . . This almost *Modest Proposal* expanded the *sushi* idiom into two ways of preserving

large catches. The “sun-dried” generally makes one think of pilchards and other small fry, as such were (and are) common.

人も見ぬ宿に櫻を植えたれば 花もて棄す身とぞ成りぬる 式部 後拾遺集  
 hito mo minu yado ni sakura o uetareba hana mote yatsusu mi to zo narinikeri shikibu d.1030  
 people+emph see-not lodge-by cherries+acc planted-if blossoms-having wasting self/body+emph become+fin.

♪ *Beauty – Who Says ‘You Can’t Take It With You?’* ♪

*I’d ring my room with cherry trees that none will come to view!  
 I’ll go to seed with my bloom. – Now, that is something new!*

*~~~~~*  
*Ring my cottage no one calls with cherries none will view  
 I’ll lose my looks but also find my dotage blooms anew!*

*~~~~~*  
*I plant cherries no man comes to view around my cottage  
 In full bloom, I pine away – that’s beauty in my dotage.*

*~~~~~*  
*I ring my hut  
 with flowering cherries  
 none will see:  
 Merry it is to go to seed  
 yet keep oneself in bloom!*

Compare the above readings with that by Thomas McAuley and students at Sheffield found on-line: *No one at all sees / This house with cherries / Planted so / The blossoms must / Have made me seedy* GSIS #101. Theirs was a good guess. Without a “yet” or “but” in the original, the relationship between the bloom and wasting away is not explicit. And, it is better to guess and sometimes create a good translation than waffle, as many – possibly most – translators do, cowardly guaranteeing a poor translation rather than risk a mistake. But, their guess unfortunately misses the wit. Attractiveness, love and living alone are standard *waka* fare, but Izumi Shikibu’s gleefully (the *zo* ending coming from a woman is no mere emphatic but a gleeful one) expressed paradox is *kyôka*. The first three readings are a tad overstated, *kudoi*, compared to the original. Later translators can always tone things down. This translator wishes to see the wit of the poets of Japan, overlooked both in translation and, worst, by the Japanese themselves to be dragged out into the open where it can be seen and identified. First things first. Ultimately subtlety is desirable, but first we must *get it!* Shikibu wrote many poems that might be considered *kyôka*, and there is no question Japanese once appreciated her as a particularly logical wit. Paradoxically, the proof is in something attributed to her, which records of her travel, etc. confirm she almost certainly did *not* write:

もとよりも塵にまじはる神なれば月の障も何かくるしき 熊野権現 風雅集  
 moto yori mo chiri ni majiwaru kami nareba tsuki no sawari mo nani ga kurushiki  
 origin-from+emph. scraps-in mix gods are-if moon-blockage+emph what's painful?

*Have not the Gods, one with paper, always mixed with other litter?  
 What is wrong with riding horses that they should mind our courses?*

The story has it that an hour from the main (Shintô) shrine in Kumano, she noticed her menses coming on and, stopping, holed up in a hut in the woods to pray, where she composed a poem about her sadness at “clouding the moon” (晴れやらぬ身のうき雲のたなびきて月のさわりとなるぞ かなしき 風雅 *hare yaranu*). That night, the shrine’s tutelary deity responded in a dream w/ the above, after which she visited the shrine. The tedious expression “one with paper” covers the pun-equation of *god/s* and *paper* in the single word *kami* that supplied the rationale for allowing a visit in mid-course. “Horses,” added for rhyme, are justifiable as protective devices resembled equestrian gear and the possibility of falling off the horse if one did not “ride” carefully resulted in just such a metaphor centuries later, when it gave rise to countless *senryû* (*The Woman Without a Hole* ch.3). “Her” *waka*, that only dates back to the mid-14c is both elegant and gutsy merely for mentioned the unmentionable, while the apocryphal response, challenging a taboo with a homophonic pun is clearly *kyôka*. Here is another horseless reading of the tutelary deity’s dream reply:

*If Gods and Paper are both kami and that includes the Rag,  
 Why should your Monthlies make the Shrine Guards gag?*

As no record has Shikibu visiting said Shrine; the legend 伏拝王子にまつわる伝説 is considered 1) an example of a *waka* getting gods to respond 歌徳説話 and 2) a teaching tool to overcome what most shrines considered superstition, to encourage female visitors. The original is more elegant than either translation but that did not prevent the always outrageous Yûchôrô from cooking up a rude response. It is captioned “Spring,” and includes a spring, or *izumi*, because Izumi is Shikibu’s family name.

泉 よるごとに式部がそそや洗ふらし むすぶいづみの水のくさは  
 yoru goto ni shikibu ga soso ya araurashi musubu izumi no mizu no kusasa wa  
 night-each-on shikibu’s pussy+emph. washes-(it’s said) cupping spring water’s stink-as-for  
 by Yûchôrô 建仁寺の長老 1547-1602 『雄長老狂歌百首』 in 『狂歌大観 1』

*Night after night, Shikibu her soso washes; my, how stinky  
 The Spring water she cups between her thumb and pinky!*

*Soso*, a woman’s genitals, is too folksy for *quim* and too pleasant for *c\_\_t*.

P\_\_\_y was tempting, but on the West side of the Atlantic, *any* word for country matters not clearly Latin is *bad* (not true for the English who use the c word as a term of endearment, often for men!). Readers of *The Woman Without a Hole* have time to acclimate (?) to these harmless words, but in this book, where they are few and far between, your translator cowardly deferred to the Japanese. Beloved by two Emperors, Shikibu had fine marital relations and her self-confidence as well as her logical mind made her the right woman for the apocryphal exchange but the fact she could have concealed her condition and said nothing allowed Yûchôrô to imagine her so ripe as to give herself away without a word, but he may also have been drawn to compose that poem because 1), according to Suzuki Tôzô, he tasted a well at a temple (誠心院:俗名和泉式部寺) where she was given a retreat (which presumably tasted bad) and was actually referring to *it*, and 2), he simply could not resist playing with her name. Like rhyme, pun can create its own reason. And though Yûchôrô's gross and juvenile poem may seem to have nothing in common with the others we have seen in this chapter, in the end, it is not so different. It was born more of logic than experience. A gloss in the 1589 book says "*I have not read anything at all about Izumi Shikibu having a bad odor, but one can hardly criticize such an okusetsu (deep/obscure-theory)*". Hoh! The gloss itself puns. *Oku*, or, "*deep*," is slang for a woman's private part and implies the name of the place she worked, the inner palace! Yûchôrô was, of course, joking. He would have known that Shikibu, being attentive to logic, was not afraid of being sniffed out. She was something else. The word for it is *principled*.

もとよりも塵に交はる神じやとてあくたれ者となさせ給ふな くれ竹世艶 kuretake  
 moto yori mo chiri ni majiwaru kami ja tote akutare mono to nasase tamau na ~ no yotsuya  
 origin-from trash-with mix/ing gods are you say. trashy/low-class-personage-as make please-not

*Lady, how brash,  
 to say gods have always  
 mixed with trash!*

*Don't you go turning us  
 into litter bugs or bums!*

*Lady, must you  
 claim that we have always  
 mixed with crap?*

*Please clean your mouth:  
 gods don't need a bum rap!*

This *kyôka* from the 1785 *Tokuwa Kago Manzaishû*, representative book of the Tenmei *kyôka* craze, is a far more reasonable objection – and note that here, as with Yûchôrô's response, the dream reply is credited to the dreamer rather than the tutelary god. The Japanese does not actually begin "Lady," but that is the gist of it. And, here, once again is wild man Yûchôrô. After that stinky *soso* poem, *he* may be in bad odour with some readers and, hopefully, this poem reprinted in the 1666 *Savage* anthology, where logic leads in a less reprehensible direction, will rehabilitate him.

虱ほと世をへつらはぬものはなし むさき人には殊に近づく 雄長老  
*shirami hodo yo o hetsurawanu mono wa nashi musaki hito ni wa koto ni chikazuku*  
 lice as-much world fawn-upon one/being-as4 not, filthy people-as4 espec. approaches

*None suck up  
 to the World less than  
 they do, the Lice:*

*No toad-eaters, they suck up  
 to the mean and not the nice!*

*Who's further  
 from the toad-eater  
 than a louse,*

*Currying favor mostly  
 in the meanest house!*

Before introducing some final sundry examples of *kyōka* where logic explains things usually not explained, let us go back a decade or two before the real Shikibu flourished to a poetic exercise in pure logic.

かたなもとながるるみづはきりつとも人のこころをいかがたのまん  
*katana mote nagaruru mizu wa kiritsu to mo hito no kokoro o ikaga tanoman*  
 sword take running water-as4 cut even/though man's heart+acc how trust-would?! kkr 2198

*Though my sword a flowing stream might, cutting, part,  
 Could I ever put my trust in another person's heart?*

ふるゆきをそらにとめてはありぬとも人のこころをいかがたのまん  
*furu yuki o sora ni tomete wa arinu to mo hito no kokoro o ikaga tanoman*  
 falling snow+acc sky-in stop-as-for is even/though man's heart+acc . . . ?! kkr 2201

*Say you suspend in the sky the falling snow, that's when  
 You'll find a human heart to trust, but not before then.*

Edwin Cranston translated forty *waka*, written by four top poets of the age (10-11c), including *Kokinshū* editor Ki no Tsurayuki, all of which claim the likelihood of finding a human heart that can be relied upon is contingent upon an impossibility described in the first half of the poem (Waka 2a). The preface for the series' lead mentions parting from an unfaithful woman, but all four poets were underpaid low-ranking aristocrats, with reason to begrudge the shifting sands of socio-politics, so the apparent sexism may cover broader discontent. So much was pointed out by Cranston, who properly found a way to end all of the poems identically as the final 7-7 is the same in all of the originals. The two translations above are different as your lazy translator was only interested in maximizing the readability of the individual poems rather than consistency. While the poems may speak to deteriorating human relations in that age, we should not take them too seriously as the poets' main inspiration was probably neither experience nor circumstance but the platform. Logic asked to play within limits, explodes in joy.

いかばかりえびを取くふ報ひあらば 終には老の腰やかゞまん 沢庵和尚  
 ikabakari ebi o tori-kuu mukui araba tsui ni wa oi no koshi ya kagaman takuan  
 howmany shrimp+acc taking eat punishmnt is-if, end-in age's back bend-would!

*The number of Shrimp you eat may be cause for alarma!  
 You could end up equally bent – that is, if there is karma.*

*If there is Karma, the number of shrimp we do or don't eat  
 Leaves us straight or bent so low our heads rest on our feet.*

*If each shrimp we eat comes back to bite us in the end,  
 To various degrees some day, our old backs will bend.*

*If we must pay for each shrimp we eat then in the end  
 Is it any wonder that with age our backs must bend?*

To understand why this is far wittier than it may seem, you need to know that every feature of the *ebi=shrimp* (a word including the giant Ise shrimp, a creature we call a crawfish in Florida but most people call a lobster despite its lack of pinchers) is propitious, significant as the embodiment of the most valued of all treasures, *longevity*. Yes, they are bent, but spry as a fiddle, snappy as jumping beans and full of the rosy color of good health. Did Takuan (1573-1645) take issue with the desirability of a bent back? Or, did he, as a monk who reflected on the sin of taking life and a logic-loving man, realize how odd it is that we benefit by eating rather than protecting this symbol? *Karma* is an awfully stiff word. *Mukui* is more like *come-uppance* or *reaping what we sow*. All of these expressions have problems here, so we went with *karma*, though it came with unwanted baggage of its own. But . . . *wait a moment!* There is a way, or rather an idiom that saves the poem in translation:

*One can hardly eat a shrimp without causing any hurt;  
 After years of eating them a crooked back is just dessert!*

That got around the *karma* and, with the food association provides a metaphysical *snap!* The same *mukui* translated differently may be seen in a lament by Tenmei *kyôka*-master Hamabe no Kurohito (pg.233).

ある人の云所定めすありき寝所はいつくそと問  
 When asked how one who wanders without fixed abode knows where to sleep –

*Wheresoever I sleep when I grow sleepy is my place to keep  
 As to where I'll go awake . . . there you may have a case!*

吾庵はねふたい時にねる所 おきてののちはしらぬ也けり 甚久法師 17c  
*waga an wa nebutai toki ni neru tokoro okite no nochi wa shiranu narikeri jinkyû*  
 my hut-as-for sleep-want time-at sleeping-place waking-after-as-for know-not is+emph!

*Where I sleep when I fall asleep you may call my flat:  
 As for where I'll be awake, I never know that!*

Though the poet is a monk there is no religious message here other than the nature of the response itself coming from the Zen tradition that some might consider paradoxical. It might better be called absolutely honest and hyperlogical. Whatever it is called, it is where the best of conceptual *kyôka* and, come to think of it, Groucho Marx, come from.

“Asked for a poem in response to the attitude expressed in the following *waka*”

世の中はかりの世なれとかりもよし夢の世なれは又寝るもよし ある人 anon.  
*yononaka wa kari no yo naredo kari mo yoshi yume no yo nareba mata neru mo yoshi*  
 world-in-as4 temp.=borrowed wrld is but brrwng's fine dream-wrld is-if again sleepng's fine

*Is the world of life on loan? I'll just borrow it to reap!  
 Is the world but a dream? Well, then I guess I'll sleep!*

~~~~~ or ~~~~~

*This world may only be lent, but I'm happy just to rent.
 This world may be a dream, but isn't sleeping pleasant?*

Teiryû, the man who, in the early-18c Ôsaka, ran what might be the largest one-man franchise of *kyôka* ever created, responded:

*This world may be lent, but it's damn hard to actually rent.
 This world may be a dream; sleep would be more pleasant.*

~~~~~ or ~~~~~

*This world may be on loan, but though you pay it will not keep.  
 The world may be but a dream. Nice, perhaps, if you can sleep.*

世の中はかりの世なれとかりにくし夢の世なれとそうもねられず 貞柳  
*yononaka wa kari no yo naredo kari-nikushi yume no yo naredo sô mo nerarezu teiryû*  
 world-in-as4 temp.=borrowed wrld is but brrwng's hard dream-wrld is-if much sleep cannot

Both poems are better in the original for the unEnglishable pun on “temporary/transient” = *kari* = “rent/ borrow.” The first poem is standard Japanese Epicureanism and Teiryû’s retort, almost surely composed in his old age, picks up on the standard punning arguments and conceptually challenges them with the double-edged blade of logic.

♪ *Japanese “free-thinking.”* I follow the lead of Captain Vasilii Mikhailovich Golownin, who was detained in Japan from 1811-13 (*Memoirs of a Captivity in Japan*). He explained how the Japanese intellectuals who visited him did not



believe in religion yet thought it good for the masses and a useful tool of the good governance that provided a long peace (unlike the constant wars in Europe) to their isolated nation. I quote him at some length in *Topsy-turvy 1585* and hypothesize whether such thought might not have inspired the famous Grand Inquisitor parable in Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880).

♪ **Hell's Fiction.** Ikkyû and other Zen monks probably did not believe in such and recognized them as useful tools. An oft-translated (since Blyth found it) *senryû* has a monk telling his mistress not to worry for it is a fiction (great sin included horrible punishments supposedly awaited clergy who swived women and the vice versa). In the absence of a thorough study of the dis/belief of Zen and the intellectual classes of Japan, my assumption is only a half-educated guess.

♪ **Too many dependents.** Suzuki Tôzô writes that Yûchôrô's complaint about an overpopulation of old folk was particularly outrageous because he was a monk who should have preached mercy for all life. An interesting observation when we consider the best-known treatise on the same problem in the Occident was by Malthus, a preacher. But, we should bear in mind the fact that inheriting a temple no more made Yûchôrô a faithful Buddhist than gaining a parish made Charles Darwin a Christian (like his Grandfather, he was a free-thinker at heart). As this poem concerns a matter particularly salient today, here is the older orthography from his hundred poem anthology 雄長老狂歌百集 in *Broadview*.

おうちはひうはひおうちこと／＼く しなすに居ては何をくはせん

It is preceded with this: 懐旧 御母儀さまをいれられさる所尤作者の粉骨也殊勝  
つ珍重々々 Your translator is not well-versed with old prose, but it would seem he indirectly apologizes for an outrageous poem by explaining that having to take care of his mother has been no easy matter.

♪ **One I missed. From the 1666 Savage Anthology.**

万物のそだてらるれば月と日をあまのはらなる乳房とやみん 来焉 古今夷曲集  
*banbutsu no sodaterarureba tsuki to hi o amanohara naru chibusa to ya min raïen*  
ten-thousand/all-things' raised-are-if moon/nth & sun/day+acc heaven's  
(milk?) meadow/fields(belly?)-is/are breasts/tits-as+emph see-would

*As All Things by ye Sun and ye Moon, are raised, my Wits  
Of Bodies Celestial, these two can only be . . . the Tits!*

Those who follow the micro- as the macro-cosmos know that the usual observation is how the relative similarity of diameter of the sun and moon viewed from earth qualifies them to be *eye balls*. *Tits* are something new. The loss of a pun – “heaven” as *ama no hara* or the heavenly field=hara=belly – and possible pun – in many dialects, *anma*=milk – is not critical, but the loss of conceptual underpinning which justifies the *growth over time* – in Japanese, the Sun and Moon are *also* days and months – that implies the presence of nursing cannot be recouped in English.

# Wingless Tôfu and Other Fantasies: Mad Surreality

雁鴨はわれを見捨てて去りにけり 豆腐に羽根のなきぞうれしき 良寛歌集  
karigamo wa ware o misutete sarinikeri tôfu ni hane no naki zo ureshiki ryôkan 1758-1831  
geese ducks-as-for me+acc abandoning leave+fin. tofu-on wings-not+emph. joyful

*The geese & duck  
abandon me and leave.*

*Thank goodness  
that our tôfu, at least  
does not boast wings!*

*Geese & duck  
leaving, I am out of luck  
happily, I see*

*My tôfu, lacking wings  
cannot abandon me!*

Living in the heyday of *kyôka* and practicing Zen with its surreal leaps of (al)logic, Monk Ryôkan came naturally to his wingless tôfu. Like Issa, he was outside the *kyôka* movement, but his poetic reparatory was more varied, including long stanzas between Chinese style and what came to be called modern poetry. The kernel of the above poem is the *haikai* seasonal motif, the return of the geese to parts westward, despite the cherries in full bloom, choosing, as Teitoku put it in one of his many amusing *ku*, “dumplings over flowers,” *i.e.*, food over decoration, the practical over the ideal. Issa, who marveled at the thick-skin *shibutosa* of these birds capable of turning their backs on such beauty, himself professed to prefer the dumplings in his old age. Since fowl was eaten – and even monks did sometimes indulge – the *tôfu*, or protein, connection is *not* utterly off the wall. But who would have thought to celebrate the winglessness of tôfu! True, the finless gefilte fish swims with difficulty (Bader: *Haiku for Jews* 1999), but even it is more aerodynamic than a block of *tôfu*.) This might seem an odd choice for a poem to start a chapter on fantasy, but I wanted to make a point about how little is needed to create one. Here, we imagine a block of tôfu sporting wings because Ryôkan is delighted that they do not have them. If that’s not food for thought, what is!

一度さへやせたる殿を山蜘蛛が絲引きかけて天へまひあがる  
ichido sae yasetaru tonô o yama-kumo ga ito hiki kakete ten e mai agaru ryôkan  
once+emph. skinny lord+acc. mountain-spider thread pull-catching heaven-to dancing-raise

*Just once, I’d see our dear Lord Bean Pole hoisted dancing  
up to heaven by a thread spun by an alpine spider!*

If only English read well vertically, as Japanese does, this poem, that seems to fuse the ancient thin-man roast with the nursery poem of the future, would be the single dangling line it ought to be. There is an allusive pun, the usual way to ascend being on a cloud = *kumo*, a spider homophone, *from* a mountain, but the poem remains an example of mad *ideas* 心の狂 as opposed to word-play! If you happen to belong to the

ranks of the involuntarily thin (unlike the fortunate fat, really unable to control their weight) and would see an example of your oppression, by all means see the poems, often cited as typical kidding-songs – and sometimes as early examples of bullying! – in the 740-page *Monster* where they have a whole chapter. Here, we shall see two others, also in the *Monster* (“*Manyôshû’s Mean Little Poems of Little Meaning*”), as they are the more fantastic. In fact, they give us some great ideas for fleshing out the experience of Gulliver on the isle of Lilliput.

小兒等 草者勿蒔 八穂蓼乎 穂積乃阿曾 脇草乎可礼 万葉集  
*warawa domo kusa na kari so yahotade o okina no aso ga wakigusa? o kare* mys #3842  
 children grass/weed don’t crop yahotade oldman’s aso’s underarm grass=stink?+acc. crop!

*The Alar Alarum*  
 (a poem of priorities)

Hey, kiddos, skip that grass!  
 It’s not half so thick  
 as the leek in old lord Aso’s  
 armpit – Cut *it*!

*Rank Garden*

*Hey, boys,  
 Let the green grass be!  
 Rather cut the blooming cane  
 below the arms of the old grandee  
 Aso, by name.*

*Axillary Alarm*

*Hey, kids,  
 the meadow can wait!  
 Mow Sir Aso’s underarms  
 before it’s too late!*

The most memorable comic poems in the 8c *Manyôshû* remind one of the cruel kidding of children. Most, like this, are anonymous. Such is not the case with most *kyôka*, but the hyperbolic wit and inanity is shared.

*Now you may talk about your horn of plenty  
 Compared to his armpit, it is empty.*

Light poems let us relax, making it easier for translation as re-creation. Let us see another, also picking on Minister Aso. As the page is fixing to turn, explanation first. Aso is also a clan and its locality, a range of flat-topped hills near Nara. The implied use for “true-vermilion” is copper, perhaps for a giant Buddha statue. The obsolete *masô* (真朱 “true vermilion”), not in Japanese-English dictionaries, is the red, vermeil clay or tuff loam, source for vermilion and copper. Cinnabar, used for mercury, is different, but also is described as vermilion, so poetic license excuses it.

何所曾 真朱穿岳 薦畳 平群乃何曾我 鼻上乎穿礼 万葉集 #3843  
 izuku ni so masô horu okakomo tatami heguri no aso ga hana no ue o hore manyô  
 whenever+emph. vermillion dig okakomo tatami heguri aso's nose-upon+acc dig!

*You want to mine vermillion from a vein that's big?  
 Go to the flat-top hills, find Aso's nose, then dig!*



*Looking for vermillion?  
 There's an inexhaustible vein  
 In the nose of Aso of Heguri plain*

~~~~~  
*You say you're short of cinnabar?
 I've the answer for your woes:
 Go find old Aso and
 dig up his nose.*

Aso is not only a rank in the bureaucracy but a term of endearment; hence “old.” A heavy drinker? Not necessarily. Bulbous red noses pretty much grow themselves; I knew a sober Japanese man with a large, flat-topped red nose. Y's image, somewhat like the lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, came to mind many times while paraversing this poem.

*Looking for red clay to mine?
 I know where there's a hill –
 Try the flat-as-a-mat Heguri range
 Old Aso's nose should be there still.*

Yes, I wove in some *Mother Goose*. I do the same when improvising with Indian or Okinawan music. Poets do it all the time in Japan.

かくれみて我があと去らぬ影法師みならびてだに月を見よかし 大隈言道
 kakureite waga ato saranu kagebôshi inarabete dani tsuki o miyogashi kotomichi 19c
 hidden-is my-behind leave-not shadow/form-monk sits-lined-up+emph. moon+acc see-would

独 ・ 居 ・ 月
Up with the moon, alone

*Always hiding behind me, shadow-monk, I wish you could
 Come out to see this moon, sit by my side, if you would.*

Shadow-monk is the standard term for one's shadow and, as “shadow” in Japanese, as once was the case for English, also means ones *reflection* or *image*, it seems a more substantial entity even without its monkifer. And,

Japanese, with their paper walls, had more fun with shadow-play than any other people on earth, though I doubt there was that much paper in the 12c when Saigyô established the precedent (which I would guess goes back to China) of shadow-monk moon-viewing, though his, lined up (*moro tomo ni kage . . .*), are just a sidelong view of a moon-viewing, while Ôkuma Kotomichi (1798-1868), whose name translates as “word-way,” by *addressing* his shadow-monk (as Ryôkan did his reflection in the gruel), knowingly creates a fantasy. Kotomichi was known as a *waka* poet but, if you ask me, this touching invitation, a bold and not at all pathetic “fallacy,” belongs in any good collection of *kyôka*, as does his next,

春暮れて永き日さびし山彦も 独りごちだに今日はせよかし 同
haru kurete nagaki hi sabishi yamahiko mo hitorigochi dani kyô wa seyogashi
 spring darkened long day/s lonely echo too alone-talk+emph. tody-as4 do-would!

*Spring is old, the hours of sunlight long and lonely
 Echo, might not today be a good time to try soliloquy?*

~~~~~  
*Summer nears, the days grow long and lonely – Echo, say,  
 You, too, might do well to talk to yourself today!*

If you find Kotomichi’s poems sweet and appealing, it is because he is. A nativist who treasured Japan’s past, he nevertheless published the best defense of the use of Chinese terms in Japanese poetry – once Japanese were used to such, they were for all who used them as natural and heartfelt as anything usually regarded as native and *not* at all artificial (see the 740-page monster for the quote) – ever written. I suppose we should call the above a “facetious fantasy.” Likewise for the next, taken from *The Untranslatable Lightness of Nakarai Bokuyô* chapter in the 740-p Monster. It was the chapter lead, and this mad poet takes us back to the 17c.

うつくしき花のした葉を見るからに くちすいせん和人やいふらん 半井ト養  
*utsukushiki hana no shitaba o miru kara ni kuchisuisen to hito ya iuran bokuyô 1607-1678*

Seeing a beautiful flower’s lower leaves, entrance narcissus is what people say.  
 + + + + +  
 Seeing a beautiful wife in her bloom, I’d kiss her is what other men say!

水仙花をいけて歌よめと有ければ  
 ~ asked for a poem about posing a narcissus ~

*This beautiful flower has no limbs to hold, but leaves below  
 to the imagination and Narcissus may be kissed, you know!*

As noted in the *Monster*, I lucked out on that translation; but, even then the sex is wrong and your translator never could unite the lines separated

by *plus* signs or address the pun on lower leaves *shitaba* as *a commoner's wife*, pulled along by a string of facial features (*nose=hana=bud* to *teeth=ha=leaves* and finally the mouth, fusing with the biggest pun on the flower's name: "*kuchi=mouth-narcissus=suisen=sucking-do-would*. Note that *sucking-mouths* was common idiom for *kissing* and *mouth* may have other meanings such as the alcove by the entrance, etc. (下口をとる=尻取り句、一口ないし小型、出入口の略等?) but, who knows!

こされとてすゝきのほてゝまねけとも いやとてくねりくねる女郎花 ト養  
 gozare tote susuki no ho dete manekedomo iya tote kuneri kuneru ominaeshi bokuyô  
 have say/as-if miscanthus plume-in showing beckonng but yuck sy/as-if wriggle x2 mdflws

♪ Read when a group of men went for an outing on the Autumn moor ♪

*'See, we have them!' beckon the waving plumes of the miscanthus;  
 How they squirm in dismay! The maiden flowers cannot stand us.*

The verb *kuneru* cannot settle its own connotation. The "yuck" in this poem made me realize my reading of what Issa meant in a haiku when he requested that maiden flowers *kuneru* more as *wriggle* – or even *grind* – might have been off. I imagined a demand for a display of physical charms, when Issa may have meant he wanted to see more *bashfulness* (*attractive* in most cultures)! Or, maybe not. With *haikai*, there is generally room for only one conceit at a time. By using his extra 14-mora to introduce and thereby combine two in this manner, Bokuyô creates a miniature play, a fantasy that reveals more. He was not the first to do so; a generation earlier, another mad poet, a monk's 100-*kyôka* collection included this:

いとすゝきたれとねてさてはらむらん そはてしめちかはらそたちける 入安  
 ito susuki tare to nete sate haramu ran soba de shimeji ga hara zo tachikeru nyûan 1610  
 string=child-miscanthus who w/ sleepng/slpt, well, conceives! side-by champgngn's belly! stands!

♪ Bride before Fall? ♪

*Little Miss Canthus,  
 with whom did you sleep, now  
 it's starting to show!*

*Is that your champ Pignon erect,  
 He looks like one angry beau!*

The Miscanthus plumes become obvious in the fall and that is called coming out in the tail and a common trope for love affairs that bear fruit and become obvious to all. That is also the time for hunting mushrooms. Field=*hara*=belly. A belly *standing* means *angry* or *erect*. The context suggests former, the little mushroom's shape the latter meaning. I found a way to have fun with, but not do justice to the original.

牛の子にふまるな庭のかたつむり 角のあるとて身をなたのみそ 寂蓮法師 集  
*ushi no ko ni fumaru na niwa no katatsumuri tsuno no aru tote mi o na tanomi so*  
 cow/ox-child/ren-by tread-not garden-snail horns hav because body/self+acc count-on not!

*Please, take care, garden snail not to be tread by a cow;  
 Trust not in your horns to protect you somehow!*

Your translator was unsure of *what* exactly was *not to be trusted* in this 12c *kyôka*. Probably *you, yourself, the snail*; As all consulted favored the above, so it became. Here, for your reference, are the rejects:

*Don't you let the oxen squash you, garden snail!  
 And ask not my help – you're the one with horns!*

~~~~~  
*Let not a cow be the one to squash you, garden snail!
 Count not on mercy just because they too have horns!*

~~~~~  
*Do not get tread by an ox my garden snail! Let him know  
 You, too, have horns & heaven is not where you would go!*

Monk Jakuren (1139-1202) had a daughter, a poet herself known only as “the daughter of Jakuren.” I do not know if he was a monk when he had his daughter but it does not matter. What *does* is that he was probably reintroduced to nursery rhymes as an adult and reacted with this sympathetic poem. Children around the world noticed these oddly timid “horns.” The English Mother Goose has bread and barley *corns* offered to draw out them out, and the Chinese Mother Goose offers roasted mutton for the same (doubtless it rhymes with the Chinese word for horns), but no horns are in the oldest recorded snail nursery verse in Japanese, found among the 12c *Ryôjinhishô*’s “contemporary ditties” (今様 *imayô*, lit. *now-styles*), that supplies the violence Jakuren must have reacted to. Its 66 syllabets are both sensitively and precisely, translated by Brownas and Thwaite: *Dance, dance, little snail! / If you do not dance, / I shall have you kicked and crushed / By a pony, by a calf. / If you dance your dance / Well and prettily, / I shall let you go and play / In a garden full of flowers* (*The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse*). If I could have translated said poem half as well as they did, believe me, I would have. Only the “little” is added, which is fine, for *child* 子 was more a term of endearment than a fact. That is no complaint, for it is all the more reason to make them *ponies* and *calves*. But, please note lest I mislead you, that while the *now-style* ditty is pretty and silly to be sure, without those horns and the logic that makes you scratch your head, the style is far from mad. Even if it had 31 syllabets, like Jakuren’s, it would not be a *kyôka*. For *that*, one needs more than just a carrot and a stick. One needs something a bit screwy, like telling a mollusk what to do or not do with its horns.



女房が角出しや爺が棒出してたたけどわれぬかたつむりかな 渭明 若葉集  
 nyôbô ga tsuno dashi toto ga bô dashite tatakedo warenu katatsumuri kana imyô 1783  
 wife's horns put-out, father's stick puts-out hits-but breaking-not-head/crown 'tis!

Watching a domestic quarrel, 夫婦いさかひするをみてよめる

*Mad as a devil his wife shows her horns & though he should flail  
 away with his cane, her crown is hard as a petrified snail!*

This Tenmei *kyôka* differs from Jakuren's mad *waka* by lacking a valid tie to any previous poem. The obvious resemblance of snail feelers to horns plays with the idiomatic horns of an angry wife (not like a man cuckolded – “they” are, why Japanese brides wear hoods) and a literal pun-reading of the name for snail, *katatsumuri*, “hard-head” used as the snapper. Instead of facetious anthropomorphism, we have what amounts to nonsense, the sense of which is almost entirely dependent upon what cannot be translated (the meaningless rhyme *flail* and *snail* does not do it). Speaking of heads-as-crowns, or *tsumuri*, the next poet's full mad name is Tsumuri no Hikaru: either “Crown's shine” or “His crown shines.”

雨ふりて ふり出だしたる 一つ目の小僧はろくろ 首のうら目か ひかる 百鬼夜狂  
 #57 ame furite furidashitaru hitotsume no kozô wa rokurokubi no urame ka hikaru 1785  
 rain falling falling-popsout one-eyed boy-as-for turnery/rubber-neck's other-side? hyakki yakyô

一 っ 目 小 僧

*Rain clouds on a jelly roll a one-eyed boy whose tongue feels nice,  
 Better get a licking than wait for the girl on the far side of the dice!*

Japanese, like most people who have not lost their cultural memes to religious or scientific fundamentalism, have abundant stories of supernatural creatures. Uniquely, perhaps, the relentless drive to literally season culture eventually made ghost-story telling, like fireworks, a summer activity, good for a chill! By the 18c, large numbers of people gathered on summer nights to tell scary tales at mansions or temples where, ideally, a hundred candles might be lit and snuffed out one by one after each tale was told. Why *a hundred*, I do not know, but there were a hundred-card sets of monsters and most collections of *ghost tale kyôka* featured the same number (100 poems, fewer monsters; or the vice-versa). I have read only 60 of the poems in the Hundred Demon (goblin/spook/etc.) *Night Madness* 百鬼夜狂 or *Hyakki Yakyô* (punning on 余興 *yokyô*, a side-show?) as the person who put it on-line stopped after strange things happened to him! Originally published in 1785, the plates got burned in 1806, but jinxed or not, popular acclaim got it reprinted in 1820. This one-eyed (often one-legged to boot) boy, studied to death by the great folklorist



Yanagita Kunio, behaved differently in different parts of Japan, but was generally held to have a tongue that dangled down from his perch – preferably an old pine – to lick the face of the unwary passerby. While sometimes said to emit a pale light, suggestive of electric activity, the rain here comes from elsewhere: *ame* is homophonous with candies that are licked or sucked and presumably draw the boy, though the verb for its falling, *furi*, suggests *shaking+dropping* something, as done for dice (Should he be “a snake-eye boy”?), something unrelated to him until we reach the other supernatural creature with a stretching body part, the long-neck woman who could walk up behind you and raise her head up and over and turning face you at the end of a neck as long as a python. Her name starts with a homophone for “six.” That *rokurokubi*, or turnery-neck 轆轤首 (折々「飛頭蛮」とも) whose pedigree goes way back, boasts an extraordinary idiom for something lengthy enough to be called *ad nauseum*: 轆轤首の反吐 *rokurokubi no hedo*, or “a turnery-neck’s vomit.” People are said to wait “with their necks outstretched” in Japan. As “wait” is pronounced *matsu* as is the pine such boys tended to wait in . . . I go too far; but the above explains why I felt driven to compensate for the loss of pun and background with the explicit tongue, idiomatic *licking* and pun-justified *wait*.

頭なき化物なりとろくろ首みて驚かん おのが体を 再現 狂歌百物語  
*atama naki bakemono nari to rokurokubi mite odorokan onoga karada wo* ng kyôka -  
 headless changeling is turnery-neck seeing-surprise-would own body+acc - hyakumono19c

*A headless spook? What in the world comes after me!  
 Looking back, a long-neck is terrified to see . . . herself.*

This came from a collection with *hundreds* of *kyôka*, including twenty for this *rokuro-kubi*, alone, according to Lafcadio Hearn, who introduced a handful of which only this was at all witty. While Hearn was well aware that his *Goblin Poetry* was the pioneering introduction of “a class of poetry about which nothing little or nothing has been written in English,” and he made a game effort to *explain* the puns in the *kyôka* he translated, his basis for selection was less the poem’s wit than its value for explaining his themes/goblins, generally major ones, chosen for their high cultural significance in Japan and China. *Rokuro-Kubi*, he writes, “is either (i) a person whose neck lengthens prodigiously during sleep, so that the head can wander about in all directions, seeking what it may devour, or (2) a person able to detach his or her head completely from the body, and to rejoin it to the neck afterwards.” (A footnote adds “In Chinese mythology the being whose neck is so constructed as to allow of the head being completely detached belongs to a special class; but in Japanese folk-tale this distinction is not always maintained.”) His translation of the above

poem, “*Will not the Rokuro-Kubi, viewing with astonishment her own body (left behind) cry out, ‘Oh, what a headless goblin have you become!’*” suggests he put it into the second category, but I think otherwise, in part, because I have yet to find a separate head called a *rokurokubi* (the poem below may be separate but it is not called a *rokurokubi*) and in part because it is more interesting to imagine her scare coming from the perspective making her body *seem* headless. Hearn, explaining why “whirling neck” and “rotating-neck” are unsatisfactory translations, notes this creature’s neck “revolves, and lengthens or retracts according to the direction of the revolution.” Precisely! Such a spiral would make the neck connecting her body less obvious to her.

女の首 首ばかり出だす女の髪の毛によれば冷たき象のさしぐし 四方赤良  
*kubi bakari idasu onna no kami no ke ni yoreba tsumetaki kisa no sashigushi yomo no akara*  
 head only stickout woman’s headhair-to approach-if cold ivory’s hairpin/shish-kebob 夜狂 #4

*A head without shoulders to break her hair looks oddly demure  
 But you’ll miss her limbs up-close & her ivory pin’s a skewer!*

~~~~~  
*Just a head is there, a white neck with long hair. Beware!
 She nears, you feel a chill . . . her ivory pin could kill.*

Kami suffices for *head-hair*, but young Ôta, Yomo no Akara, stretches it into *kaminoke*, perhaps for the individual *hair* character 毛 to aim at the elephant 象 in *ivory* and allude to a saying: “*One woman’s hair can pull an elephant*,” having little to do with the plot. Regardless, Akara’s poem is not as good as the previous one, whose author Hearn does not give.

行人をしねとすすむる占榎これや冥土の一里塚かも さんわ 百鬼夜狂 #45
yuku hito o shine to susumuru furu-enoki kore ya meidô no ichirizuka kamo sanwa 1785
 going people+acc “die!” recommend old hackberry this+emph. afterworld’s mile-marker/s

死 ね 死 ね 榎

*The old hackberries whispering “Die! Die!” to the passerby
 Do they, like gate-pines, mark our final route and why?*

~~~~~  
*Are old Enoki that whisper we should ‘Die!’ really Dutch?  
 Why else would they want us in the nether lands that much!*

Were old Enoki in out-of-the-way places really so spooky they could be made to say what Issa more understandably puts in the mouth of a raven (he has them say “eat-shit! from *kurae!* imperative for eat and felt that like a curse)? Or, is this specter simply an artificial fusion of Ikkyû’s famous mad poem calling the New Year gate-pines (*kadomatsu*) road-marks to the

Nether world with *enoki*, adopted by the Shogunate for mile-markers on the highways of Japan? Since, English cannot evoke Ikkyû's poem, my second, mad reading takes one of *our* old names for the Other World neither Paradise, Hell, nor Purgatory. By "nether lands" I mean lower regions (North/nether once was "down" on our maps), of course. *Stylewise*, however, my mad reading feels closer to this 'Night Madness' *kyôka* than the more explanatory respectable one.

離魂病 目の前に 二つの姿あらはすは水にも月のかげのわづらひ 宿屋めし盛  
*me no mae ni futatsu no sugata arawasu wa mizu ni mo tsukinokage no wazurai* 夜狂#5  
 eye/s –before two-forms appear-as-4 water-in too moon's affliction meshimori 1785

### Doppelgangers

*Before your I's, behold, a W appears, & loh!  
 In the dark water, the moon, too, is not alone.*

~~~~~  
*Mirror before, mirror behind, the nape in back, she cannot find:
 Do her mirrors see doppel, too? Or, are both faces in her mind!*

玉くしけ 二つの姿見せぬるは 合せ鏡のかげのわづらひ 狂歌百物語 和文再現
tamakushige futatsu no sugata misenuru wa awase-kagami no kage no wazurai ng hyakumono
 gem/pretty-comb(box) two forms show-as4 combined mirrors' reflection afflicted 19c
 L.H.: If, when seated before her toilet-stand, she sees two faces reflected in her mirror – that
 might be caused by the mirror doubling itself under the influence of the Shadow-Sickness.

Lafcadio Hearn's reading of the second is followed by an apology for the "multiplicity of suggestion impossible to render in translation." He explains that while making her toilet, the Japanese woman uses two mirrors (*awase-kagami*), one a hand-mirror to show the back of her coiffure – I would add the carefully outlined nape of the neck – upon the larger stationary mirror. Suffering from *rikonbyô*, lit. "separated-soul disease," the woman sees something else. Hearn gives a dozen poems showing the progress of this malady marked by the soul's leaving the body to animate a phantom of a women hurt in love, as it is a vital concept for understanding Japanese literature. He also notes "a suggestion of ghostly sympathy said to exist between a mirror and the soul of its possessor." I would add that both *kage* (reflection or countenance rather than "shadow" in mod. English) and *wazurai* (a dread disease) are associated with the moon, the latter with an eclipse.

から傘のあばら骨のみ残りけり あら肉吸ひの夜の嵐や 光 夜狂 #34
karakasa no abarabone nomi nokorikeri arashishi sui no yoru no arashi ya hikaru
 chinese umbrella's ribs only remain!/: raw-meat sucking night's storm! *yakkyô* 1785

*Chinese umbrellas their bare ribs drying in the fetid air,
 Left by a flesh-sucking whirl, a night gale . . . a girl!*

This terrifying Night Madness changeling is clearly no goblin but a *ghoul*. The *shishi-sui*, or meat-sucker, said to appear in the mountains=wild in the form of a laughing seventeen or eighteen year-old girl, might ask for a light, then, if you let your guard down, bite into you and hold on until she had sucked up all of your flesh. Think of that umbrella as the bones of the victim of a one-girl piranha attack on land.

行灯のあぶらなめてふ化け物のはつと消えたるもゝんがはらけ めしもり
andon no abura-name to iu bakemono no hatto kietaru momongawarake meshimori
 lanterns' oil-licker called changeling's poof vanished flyingsquirrels 同 #21

*Oil-lickers so named because they have that trick, vanish quick
 As the boogie-man or flames sucked from a lamp wick.*

~~~~~  
*The oil-lickers lick your lamp, then, oil gone, they vanish, too.  
 Quick as flying squirrels, poof! Like flames on a dry wick do.*

The *abura-name*, 油なめ oil or grease-licker, is probably common to all lamp-users for mice alone can not explain the varying oil consumption. Meshimori's wit lies in dovetailing a boogiemane who pretended to swoop in to attack small children while yelling *momonga*, or "flying-squirrel!" with a *kawarake*, an unglazed vessel sometimes used to hold oil.

眼は鏡口は盥のほどにあく蝦蟇も化生のものところぞ知れ 狂歌百物語  
*me wa kagami kuchi wa tarai no hodo ni aku gama mo keshô no mono to koso shire*  
 eyes-as-for mirrors mouth-as-for tub-amount open toad too changeling/make-up thing know!

*Looking-glass eyes, & a mouth that opens like a basin,  
 A toad's a goblin you can look and wash your face in!*

The common word for any sort of ghost or changeling is *bakemono* 化け物, but here the toad is called a *keshô* 化生. That is for the homophonic make-up 化粧 (literally change-powder) or toiletry. Hearn's explanatory translation puts the pun into a parenthesis: "*The eye of it, widely open, like a (round) mirror; the mouth of it opening like a wash-basin — by these things you may know that the Toad is a goblin-thing (or, that the Toad is a toilet article).*" I was going to go the parallel translation route – one for each meaning, but came up with a more creative alternative which I do not know how to describe. But let me add that though Japanese houses had few furnishings by cluttered Occidental standards, the furniture, utensils and other objects had a much busier life of the spirit for ghost stories where they came to life were well known. In the most famous one, old utensils thrown out in winter cleaning took blood-thirsty revenge on

humans! What better story to teach children not only the golden rule but to be nice to *things*.

~~~~~  
 梅が香を桜の花に匂はせて柳の枝に咲かせてもがな 中原時致 10c?
ume ga kô o sakura no hana ni niowasete yanagi no eda ni sakasete mogana tokimune
 plum's scent+acc cherry-blossom-on smell-letting willow-limb-on bloom-would wish!

*May the scent of plum in cherry blossom beauty bloom
 upon the young green limbs of the willow by my room!*

Ryôkan's poem wishing for his shadow to be able to sit next to him is the most creative "wish poem" – a word just coined – your translator knows. The above is what might be called a common-place wish. We all compile good qualities when we think (or thought) of ideal mates or products . . . Your translator is not a good compiler as he lost the source, but it would seem a *waka*.

~~~~~  
 ♪ *How to define fantasy?* In the 740-page *Monster*, I give a chapter to the supposed Iwabune or Stone Ships found up sacred mountains. The poems were *waka*, not *kyôka*. If tied into science-fiction fantasies about overcoming gravity, we have fantasy here, but it seems improper (?) to treat what is more a myth or national/religious legend in that way. So it is not in this chapter.

♪ **Plum flowers *ume no hana*.** Your translator follows convention, but some botany-lovers prefer to make it a "flowering apricot."

♪ **Issa's wriggling *ominaeshi* (whore/maiden) flower poem:**

女郎花もつとくねれよ星迎ひ  
*ominaeshi motto kunereyo hoshi-mukai*  
 patrinia scabiosaefolia more squirm!/wiggle! star-tryst

*Whore flowers,  
 let me see you bump & grind!  
 The stars won't mind.*

*Maiden Flowers  
 Squirm more, you should be shy  
 The stars in the sky . . .*

*Maiden flowers  
 Squirm more! Up in the sky  
 The Stars meet.*

1) My old reading (女郎 can also mean *whore*). 2) New, shy reading & 3) free.

## Mad Parody – *sampling what some call typical kyôka.*

偽りのなき世なりけり神無月 たが誠より しぐれそめけん 定家 続後拾遺  
itsuwari no naki yo narikeri kaminazuki taga makoto yori shigure someken teika d.1241  
falsehood's not world become-has! gods-not-month whose sincerity-from shigure started?

*Today, for once,  
this world is not false.  
As the gods leave,*

*Whose faith brings us  
the cold rain right on time?*

*Gods-gone Month.  
And falsehood, too, has fled  
the world for good –*

*Who is so true that cold  
time-rain should start on cue?*

This thirteenth-century *waka* by Fujiwara Teika works poorly in English not so much because of the lack of equivalent vocabulary for rain and months as because of a difference in rhetoric. In English poetry, the names or reputed properties of things are rarely contrasted with their reality. In Japanese traditional poetry, it is *very* common. Teika's "who," unlike the "it" in Alan Watt's "What is this *it* that rains?" has significance; but *what*? In the *Tales of Genji*, this meandering shower of late-fall or cold drizzle marking the start of winter usually written with characters meaning time+rain, is dead Aoi's soul. More commonly, it was a projection of a live woman wishing rain to stay a lover. There may be a romantic allusion here, a response to someone's doubt after *Kokinshû* poem #146, which discounts a lover's words in a time when betrayal was rift. Since Teika composed the song at his Time-rain Arbor (Shigure-tei 時雨亭) home, the who/se may be Teika himself, and his concern solely for the reputation of the *shigure*, though one cannot say whether that affection is aesthetic or ascetic, *i.e.* for rain that dyes leaves and hearts or, being cold, provides desired spiritual trial. If the latter element is paramount, the "who/se" might be the Law/Buddha, in which case, the Gods-gone Month comes to mean more than just the usual time for the *shigure*. This may be a famous poem, but no one seems to know exactly what it means. Luckily, that did not discourage parody, much of which is easy to read and entertaining.

偽のある世なりけり神無月ひんほう神は身をもはなれぬ 雄長老 狂歌百首  
itsuwari no aru yo narikeri kaminazuki binbôgami wa mi o mo hanarenu yûchôrô 16c  
falsehoods are world is+emph gods-gone-world poverty-gods-as-for me/body+acc leave-not

*No, it is indeed a world of falsehood, this Gods-gone Month  
The God of Poverty just will not let me be!*

Yûchôrô made at least a dozen *kyôka* about the Poverty God, firmly embedding the theme in *kyôka* tradition. He observed in a preface that the offerings at his temple were down in early winter when the Gods were supposed to be caucusing in Izumo. If Poverty, or the poverty gods, stay



behind, it proves Gods-gone-month is not what it should be. “No, Teika,” his poem retorts, “the *shigure* may have fallen right on time for you, but my offertory says that *Kokinshû* poem #146 is right, the world is out of kilter!” With the Shintô gods away from the shrines, Buddhist temples usually did well at this time. Teiryû (c.1730) put it like this: *Among men there are no demons at all, in God-gone month, / Coins fly by crocodile jaws faster than the time-rain falls!*” (人におにはなき世なりけり神無月時雨より猶ふるは散銭 狂歌ますかがみ *hito no oni wa naki yo narikeri kaminazuki shigure yori nao furu wa chirizeni*. 蛇足 Your translator added the *crocodile mouth*, the gong struck close to the offertory at a Buddhist temple, for the drama.) Or, the same expressed in a nativist vein,

出雲路へ集り給ふ留主なれば我神国に仏あり月 則本太山 狂歌餅月夜  
*izumoji e atsumari-tamau rusu nareba waga shinkoku ni hotoke ari tsuki taisan?* 1740  
 izumo road-to gathering-do(respect.) absent-be-when our-godsland-in bddha-is-mnth

*They leave for their caucus in Izumo, we merrily say ‘Adieu!’  
 In our land of all the Gods, this is Buddha’s-here-month, too.*

~~~~~  
*When they leave us to caucus in Izumo, we are still blest:
 This month in Gods’ Country, the Buddha is manifest.*

But to return to the varied play upon Teika’s *waka*, here is an exchange between Ritsukatei Bokutan and Teiryû, his teacher whom he followed as the leading *kyôka* master of the mid-18c. The meaning of the first poem is unclear but the sympathetic reply shows why Teiryû was loved by all:

正直の頭もいたし神無月 あまり時雨の誠すぎるで 栗柯亭木端 1735
shôjiki no atama mo itashi kaminazuki amari shigure no makoto sugiru de bokutan
 honest head even hurts gods-out-month too-much shigure’s sincere-excess-from 狂歌ますかがみ

*Our most honest heads are hurting this gods-gone month,
 With the time-rains too earnestly living up to their name!*

~~~~~  
*Gods-gone month, I’d say these time-rains were too earnest.  
 Would they might prove to be just a little bit more false!*

神無月 あまり時雨は誠すきた ちと偽りて日和なれかし 由縁斎=貞柳  
*kaminazuki amari shigure wa makoto sugita chito itsuwarite hiyori naregashi teiryû*  
 gods-not-month too-much time-rain-as-4 sincere-overly, slightly deceiving clear-day flow-want

Gods were proverbially held to reside in honest heads 正直の頭に神宿る; but why “hurt/ache”? Does cold rain bring headaches? Is young Bokutan simply saying, my, we have had a wet start to the winter; or is he doing a stint of begging at a temple and finds it tough going? Who knows!

神／＼の留守をあづかる月なれば 馬鹿正直に時雨ふるなり 蜀山人百首  
*kamigami no rusu o azukaru tsuki nareba baka-shôjiki ni shigure furu nari shokusanjin d.1823*  
 gods' absence+acc keeping month is/become-when fool-honestly/honest-fool-on time-rain falls is

*When that month  
 comes and our gods leave,  
 the time-rain falls;*

*Right on schedule, even  
 nature honest to a fault!*

*This is the month  
 our kami stay away but still  
 a cold rain falls*

*Upon the godless heads  
 of all men honest to a fault*

This parody of Teika's *waka* by Tenmei *kyôka*-master Shokusanjin probably ranks among the ten most commonly encountered *kyôka*. The honest head in Bokutan's poem has hyperbolized into a "foolishly-honest" *baka shôjiki* one. The first reading addresses the character of the rain called *shigure*, kidding it and indirectly poking fun at Teika's poem. The second, which takes foolishly honest as such a person – the Japanese is ambiguous that way – is absurd, but grammatically equally viable. Even a theoretical physicist could not come up with a unified translation of this poem. But one can always try to create new variants that stand-alone. Eg.:

*Gods gone, a cold rain falls on all honest crowns –  
 Emptied of the gods, how loudly each drop sounds!*

Not that any of this really solves the poem. When you try to completely grasp Shokusanjin's parody, you find it, like Teika's original, is ineffable. Whether this is better or worse than Yûchôrô's simple parody relating the paradox of poverty at a time Poverty was supposed to be out, is a matter of taste. Speaking of which, here is a *shigure* parody different from both:

鬼ならぬ神の御留守は時雨して洗濯すべき日和だになし 業枝 一万週 18c?  
*oni naranu kami no on rusu wa shigure shite sentaku subeki hiyori dani nashi gyôshi?*  
 demon/s is/are-not gods' hon.+absence-as-4 time-rain doing, laundry do-ought clearday +emph. not!

*When the devil's out . . . – but today, it is the gods who are away;  
 And, damn if the time-rain leaves one clear day for us to play!*

~~~~~  
*The gods and not the demons are out to play, but dirty laundry
 needs at least one sunny day . . . – all we get is shi-gu-re!*

Parody, that is, if playing with a proverb – "(life's) Laundry is washed when the demon/devil (=boss? spouse?) is out" – rather than another poem can be so called. There may well be as many *kyôka* playing with proverbs, short Chinese phrases, popular etymologies and other old saws of one type or another as those playing with older poems.

~~~~~

はちす葉のにごりにしまぬ心もて なにかは露を玉とあざむく 遍照  
*hachisu-ha no nigori ni shimanu kokoro mote nanika wa tsuyu no tama to azamuku*  
 lotus leaf/s' muddiness-in stain-not heart having what/why-so dew's gem as defraud/pretend

(Mad Poem, or Not?)

*Lotus risen up  
 from mud, so pure of heart  
 how dare you!*

*Or, rather, why do you  
 make jewels, with art?*

*Lotus leaves,  
 pure of soul, unstained  
 by the mud below*

*How is it, even you could  
 pass your dew for pearls?*

This is a famous *Kokinshû waka* by the witty Archbishop Henjô (816-90). The verb *azamuku*, suggesting dew deliberately misrepresents itself, is outrageous. Were the poem *haikai*, it would be called a back-handed celebration of the beauty of dew, playing on the conceit of dew-drops as *tama=gem/jewel/ball/pearl*. But Henjô, writing before seasonal *haikai*, plays on the conceit itself, after setting it up with words straight from the Lotus Sutra 法華經の湧出品, rather than celebrating the beauty *per se*. Henjô's *waka*, as clear as Teika's *shigure* is obscure, also bore numerous progeny. Objectively classified, it could, itself, be called a *conceptual kyôka*. *Kyôka* are often parodied, but not so much as famous *waka* are, so, for parody's sake, a proper *waka* identification is a godsend.

蓮飯・めしはみなくひつくしたる蓮葉にのこれる粒や露とあざむく 瓢のから酒 徳和  
*meshi wa mina kuitsukushitaru hachisuha ni nokoreru tsubu ya tsuyu to azamuku hisago no karazake*  
 meal-as-for all eat-exhausted lotus-leaves-on remaining grains: dew-as deceive/resemble 1785

*The grains of rice  
 stuck to the lotus leaf  
 after you've eaten*

*I guess they're trying  
 to pass for dew drops.*

*After a good meal  
 some grains of rice stay  
 on your lotus leaf*

*Trying to make you think  
 they are nothing but dew.*

This Tenmei era *kyôka* titled "Lotus-rice/lunch," *Hasuhan*, by Hisago no Karazake has no wordplay in it. *None*. Hamada, the Iwanami annotator, unkindly claims, "*it is just a poem that has rice grains stand for dew drops.*" He fails to note that makes the poem not only a parody of Henjô's *waka* but an allusive envoi for a much older poem, *Manyôshû* #3837, a prosaic impromptu response to a request for a 'lotus leaf' poem *because the party was eating off them*. Despite rainless weather, the preface notes, there was "water gathered on the lotus leaves resembling (rain) drops=*tama=jewels*." The poem, picking up on the *Manyôshû* poem, throws a dead-pan monkey wrench into centuries of Henjô's *waka*-inspired lotushood+dew-drop parodies which are, on the whole, less

interesting than the original. Here are some noteworthy exceptions:

見事にて 手にはとられず 白露のきえやすきこそ玉に疵なれ 未得 吾吟我集  
 migoto nite te ni wa torarezu shiratsuyu no kieyasuki koso tama ni kizu nare mitoku 1649  
 beautiful-as hand-in-as-for taking/holding-cannot white-dew's vanish-easily esp. gem-on flaw is

*So beautiful I would pick them up, these dewy pearls!  
 'Tis a flaw in perfection to break as easily as they do.*

~~~~~

*So damn beautiful, yet I cannot pick up the luminous dew,
 'Tis said perfection has a flaw: you break, it's true.*

~~~~~

*Beautiful, yet the luminous dew in hand I cannot take.  
 'Tis said all perfection comes with a flaw: you break!*

Is this poem by Mitoku, probably the most highly respected seventeenth century *kyôka* poet today, too simple to be good, or is it a brilliant idea only easy in retrospect? As the fragility and short-life of dew was precisely what made it a precious metaphor, there is irony in that becoming its fault, which reveals the contradictory nature of that metaphor and the conceit of dew as a gem. That is surely worth something.

風こえてちるぞ涼しき蓮葉になにかは露を玉とのみ見む 本居宣長  
 kaze koete chiruzo suzushiki hachisuha ni nani ka wa tsuyu o tama to nomi mimu  
 wind crossing scatter+emph. cool lotus leaf-by/in what-as-for dew+acc. gem as only see

*Winds pass over  
 and off they go: that's cool.  
 So what makes us*

*want to see the dew drops  
 on lotus pads as jewels?*

*How cool it is  
 when they skate about  
 with the wind!*

*What in the lotus pad makes  
 us see dew drops as gems?*

This poem by the famed scholar of ancient Japanese and sometimes rabid nativist Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) is not one of his better known poems but may be the best one he ever wrote and one of the best *meta-waka* (one reflecting upon *waka* or *waka* terms) ever written by anyone. If literary critics liked ideas, it would be famous. Like Teika's *shigure waka*, it is posed as a question and hard to grasp. Does Norinaga imply it is 1) refreshing that dew scatters rather than staying as a real gem/pearl would? 2) literally cool watching them tumble about (lotus dew is a summer phenomenon) on those pads? Norinaga would doubtless discourage such analysis and claim the question (*What is there in a lotus pad, so cool when wind scatters the dew drops, to make us see them only as jewels?*) says it all. The inclusion of a chunk of Henjô's poem and that extraordinarily rational question – all fresh questions are, to most people, who never ask

them, *mad* – makes Norinaga's poem a *kyôka* of sorts. Hisago no Karazake's rice grains likewise question the metaphor, but do so in an indirect, facetiously naive manner by reversing the metaphor so instead of the dew pretending to be something substantial, something substantial pretends to be dew. Its madness, then, lay not in having rice grains stand for dew-drops (maggots could do that better), but in the discovery that metaphor itself is double-edged sword. And no one grasped that sword like the *haikai*-master Issa, who, judging from his scores of thoughtful haiku on the subject, was Japan's leading philosopher of dew.

白露のてれん偽なき世哉 一茶 文化九  
 shiratsuya no teren itsuwari naki yo kana issa  
 white-dew's sleight-of-hand deception not world!

*White dew drops, this much I understand –  
 No fraud is involved in your sleight of hand*

~~~~~  
The magic of pearly dew drops is for real.
 ~~~~~

*This dew works magic that we might realize  
 the real world > lies < before our eyes!*

We are straying off the path of parody, but let us follow Issa's conceptual dew a while longer. Here is one of his *kyôka*:

白露に味のなきこそうれしけれ 甘くば人の集まりやせん 一茶 文政三  
 shiratsuyu ni aji no naki koso ureshikere amakuba hito no atsumariyasen issa 1823  
 white-dew-in flavor/taste's not +emph. delighted-be sweet-if peoples' gather-not-do?

### *The Treasure Hunt*

*We should be grateful that dew drops have no taste;  
 For if they did not a one would long remain in place!*

### *Democratic Beauty*

*That dew drops are not sweet is something to be thankful for:  
 No one will rob or, taxing, steal their eye treat from the poor!*

Pardon the titles, not in the original. The first reading recalls Zhuang-zhi's good-for-nothing and therefore long-lived tree. The second, the poverty of the poet. Unless there is a just-so-story or proverb touching upon dew's lack of flavor, applying that principle to dew took some doing. But, Issa only writes that people would gather them. Your translator over does it.

味あらば喧嘩の種ぞ露の玉 一茶  
 aji araba kenka no tane zo tsuyu no tama issa  
 flavor have-if quarrels' seed/s +emph.: dew drops

*if they had taste  
 they would cause quarrels  
 pretty dew drops*

*the dew drops  
 would surely brew fights if  
 they tasted good*

*sure as hell  
 if dew tasted good, we'd  
 fight over it*

*If sweet, the dew  
 would be 'dew of mine'  
 & 'dew of thine.'*

*if sweet, surely  
 we'd see 'my dew' for me  
 your dew for thee*

sweet-if sure-enough my dew people/other's dew  
 amakaraba sazo oraga tsuyu hito no tsuyu  
 甘からばさぞおらが露人の露

Having just seen Issa's *kyôka* version of the same, it is easy to see that these *kyôku* – acceptable haiku as dew is a seasonal subject and, as pointed out already, an indirect way of praising the beauty of the drops – are, qualitatively speaking, similar to *kyôka*. There was no unsurpassable wall between the *waka* romantics, post-Bashô haikai nature-lovers and *kyôka* conceptual poets and word(play)smiths.

心なき身にもあはれは知られけり 鴨たつ澤の秋の夕ぐれ 西行  
 kokoronaki mi ni mo aware wa shirarekeri shigi tatsu sawa no aki no yugure saigyô d.1190  
 heart-not body/self-to even sadness/beauty-as-for known-is+emph snipe/s leave marsh's fall's dusk

*Even a monk  
 no longer of the world  
 can be moved*

*Caught by his bill  
 when he tried to force  
 a cherry stone*

*When snipe start at dusk  
 from the autumn marsh*

*The snipe cannot fly off  
 at dusk this fall*

clam in beak pushing-penetrate-would and stuck snipe takes-off-cannot fall-dusk yado no meshimori  
 hamaguri ni hashi oshi-tsuka to hasamarete shigi tachikaneru aki no yugure 狂歌才藏集 1787  
 蛤にはしをしつかとはさまれて 鴨たちかねる 秋の夕ぐれ 宿屋飯盛

On the left the best-known *waka* by Saigyô, probably Japan's most beloved *waka* poet. On the right, the second-best-known poem by Tenmei *kyôka* master and national-studies scholar Yado no Meshimori, whose best-known poem (why bad poets are preferable to good) we have already

seen. The *hamaguri* that shrank into a “clam” in translation was having a hard time filling up a line until the dictionary supplied just the sort of word a mad poem wants, *cherry-stone*. Yet, were the poem not written in standard language, the translator might have done this:

*Thanks to his bill,  
that snipe can not bolt  
this autumn night.*

*The quahog he'd jimmy  
is holding him still.*

Japanese legend has adulterous lovers locked like dogs for their sin (serious because the spouse was on a pilgrimage). Meshimori obviously plays with that – an erotic print by Kitagawa Utamaro has this very *kyôka* on the fan held by one of two lovers in congress on the second floor of a tea-house – while innocently borrowing from a moral tale featuring a hungry snipe and (hungry?) clam taken by a fisherman, locked in battle (漁夫の利『戦国策』) and, with that “fall evening” binds his poem to Saigyô's well-known *waka* evoking a very different sort of melancholy. If the latter is delicate, it asks for just such a slapstick response. One can find nothing to fault in such a parody. Still, it is fair to ask if it moves us as much as a far less well-known response to Saigyô's *waka* by young Issa.

つく／＼と鳴我を見る夕べ哉 一茶  
*tsukuzuku to shigi ware o miru yûbe kana issa d.1827*  
keenly snipe/s me-at look/ing evening/dusk 'tis!/?

*How keenly  
the snipe looks at me;  
and it is dusk.*

*this evening  
when the snipes intently  
stare at me*

*It's evening.  
Is the snipe drawing  
a bead on me?*

Issa had a country boy's feeling about the natural world and expressed doubts about urban lyricism (snow, in particular, he called “bad stuff” *warui mono*). Did Issa feel the snipe, an embodiment of Saigyô's melancholy soul, gazing deep into his, wondering if *he* felt that *aware*? There is an interesting paradox here. The mere fact Issa thinks such thoughts proves he is moved, does it not? Or, are we over-reading a simple observational haiku? Aside from making it into Issa's top 2000-*ku* anthology (丸山選 岩波文庫), where it is unannotated, this *ku* has received little or no attention.



~~~~~  
 有明のつれなく見えし別れより暁ばかり憂きものはなし 壬生忠岑
ariake no tsurenaku mo mieshi wakare yori akatsuki bakari ukimono wa nashi mibu-no
 matin-moon wretched+emph looked parting-from dawn-as blue thing-as4 not -tadamine

*Since that parting when in misery we saw the matin moon,
 Dawn, of all things in the world, always brings me gloom!*

Souring on dawn itself because of one sad parting is mad to begin with, is it not? Here, for once, Rodd and Henkenius' reading of this *Kokinshû* (c905) poem #625 – “*since that parting when / I saw the cold indifferent / countenance of the / fading moon I have known / nothing so cruel as dawn*”(1984/96), not to mention Carter's, “. . . / *when I saw that distant look / in the late moon's glare, / . . .*” seem more *kyôka* than this mad translator's perversely conservative interpretation made before reading Kyûsojin note crediting the poem to “a woman ある女” in Tadamine's collection and *a meeting after waiting with no consummation*. One of the more bathetic *waka* in the *Kokinshû* and the anthology that made it famous, *Hundred Poets One Poem* (it is #30), it cries for the following parody:

有明のつれなくいへぬ皮癬瘡かくばかり身に憂きものはなし 沢庵和尚
ariake no tsurenaku ienu hizengasa kakubakari mi ni ukimono wa nashi monk takuan
 matinmoon's wretched heal=say-not scabies(mites) scratch=such body/self-to blues-as4 not

*Up with scabies until dawn real misery sings another tune
 Scratching, tell me, itching, tell me of your matin moon!*

While including a direct retort in “*the matin moon is hardly cruel*,” the parody by itchy Monk Takuan (1573-1645) puns on “scratching only” and “to this extent” (both *kakubakari*) to make it clear that scabies was *real* misery. Here, we do not feel anything similar to parody for the sake of parody. We have a poem composed for the poet's relief. While playing with other people's poems, we forget ourselves. You can bet that Takuan did not feel his itching as he penned his parody as your translator did not hear his tinnitus while re-creating it in translation. And, since other people usually appreciate a parody while they are liable to look askance at a straight complaint, it is a medicine for the spirit one can share.

~~~~~  
 The parodies we have seen so far are singular products, but the best place to appreciate parody-as-an-art is in a series, when an entire anthology is parodied. Let us see some samples from one such work parodying the *Hundred Poets One Poem* (*Hyakunin-issshu*) by the Tenmei *kyôka*'s first man Ôta Nanpo, aka Shokusanjin, interspersed with some sundry parodies by other poets. Here is the first poem in his *Kyôka Hundred Poets*:

parody: 秋の田のかりほの庵の歌がるた とりぞこなつて雪は降りつつ 蜀山人

original: 秋の田のかりほの廬の苫をあらみ 我が衣手は 露にぬれつつ 天智天皇

parody: aki no ta no kariho no io no utagaruta torizokonatte yuki wa furitsutsu shokusanjin 狂歌百人一首

orig.: aki no ta no kariho no io no toma o arami waga koromode wa tsuyu ni nuretsutsu emp. tenji 7c

parod: autumn field's harvested-rice-ears' cottage's poem-card take-mistaking snow-as4, falling-while

original. autumn field's harvested ears' hut's matting (made) rough my sleeves-as-for dew-w/ wetting

*The hut for ears of grain from autumn fields, I sought – oh, no!  
That song card was wrong, so, now I pluck in the falling snow.*

Orig.: Coarse the rush-mat roof, sheltering the harvest-hut of the autumn rice-field; /  
And my sleeves are growing wet with the moisture dripping through. trans. CM 1907

Parody is doubly difficult in translation because interesting readings require the same poetic license for both originals so chance dictates that the two poems drift apart. The side-by-side romanization and gloss show the similar start of both better than a comparison of the translations (the *waka* by Clay MacCauley). The take-off lets go of the damp second half of the original and heads right to the popular card game which helped make the *Hundred Poet* anthology the most popular and most parodied in Japan and probably the world. Speed won matches, so players often snatched up the wrong card and that was particularly common with poem #1 because #15 also began the second part “my (long) sleeves ~” (*waga koromode*), though said sleeves get soaked in dew in the former, while snow is braved to pluck young greens in the latter. As most poems in the *Hundred Poet* anthology already had more than one good parody, if one sticks close to the poem it is hard to come up with a fresh angle. With the very first poem, the great poet-editor shows us how to moot that problem altogether and, in so doing, invents a new genre of meta-parody.

orig.: 春過ぎて夏来にけらし 白妙の衣ほすてふあまの香久山 持統天皇

parody: いかほどの洗濯なれば かぐ山で衣ほすてふ 持統天皇 蜀山先生

orig.: haru sugite natsu kinikerashi shirotae no koromo hosu chô ama no kaguyama emp. jitô

parody: ika hodo no sentaku nareba kagu yama de koromo hosu chô jitô tenno shôkusanjin

orig.: spring passing summer came-seems white/mulberry bark robes dry said heaven's kagu-mt.

parody: how much laundry become-would/if kagu-mt.-with/at robes dry said jitô emperor

*With spring done,  
has summer now come?*

*Behold the white  
Robes of mulberry drying  
on heavenly Mount Kagu.*

*How much laundry  
did Empress Jitô have?*

*Enough, i guess,  
That to dry it she had to  
resort to Mount Kagu*

This facetiously naive response to the second poem in *Hundred Poets* by Empress Jitô (645-702) takes only one phrase from the original, “drying

*clothes/robes*” and is basically a comment about the poet based on the content of her poem. Shokusanjin knew the pure white robes woven of pounded and bleached mulberry bark fiber were used for sacred ceremonies and not her personal wardrobe. The name of the small mountain, near the Imperial palace, Kagu, is homophonous with *fragrant* and *furniture*, including laundry poles, which may or may not have helped evoke the response. There may be more to the *waka* than has traditionally been read into it. Is it not possible the Empress describes waterfalls flush with the rain of early summer shining in the sun? The hills might have been landscaped for the Empress’s viewing pleasure and the original preface for the poem lost . . . Or, considering the ancient ties of the white-robed women called *ama* – homophonic with the heavenly epithet of Mt. Kagu – who dove for abalone and the Imperial family, who can say there is not a just-so explanation here? –

*I Know Why We Call It That*

*With spring over,  
summer is a sea of green  
and blue, drying*

*White robes, yes, abalone girls  
make it Ama no Mount Kagu!*

Such a just-so reading would also make sense of the “as/so said” てふ *chô* (“to iu” in modern Japanese) pegged on the *ama*. Needless to say, an amateur explanation not offered by other annotators over the millennia is almost surely bogus, but one cannot help trying to make sense of things. Be that as it may, Shokusanjin’s *kyôka* is beaten by a *senryû*:

山で干すさすが女帝は衣裳持ち  
*yama de hosu sasuga jotei wa koromo mochi*  
mountain-with dry surenuf empress-as-for clothes-owner

*Needing a mountain  
to dry them, man, that empress  
had a wardrobe!*

All things equal, brevity is not only the soul of wit but its measure. The *senryû*, unfortunately, undated (prob. late-18-early 19c), says it all. In Shokusanjin’s defense, he did all 100 *waka*. And who says the anonymous *senryû* isn’t his? One more point before proceeding to #3 of *Hundred Poems*. Neither Shokusanjin’s *kyôka* nor the *senryû* are *imitations*. English dictionaries define “parody” many ways, but rarely fail to mention *imitation*. So, is or is not Shokusanjin’s poem a *parody*?

足引の山鳥の尾のしだり尾の長々し夜を独りかも寝ん 柿本人丸 7c  
 光陰は山鳥の矢のことし長／＼敷も長寝せんかも 貞柳 犬百 活玉  
 あし引の 山鳥のおの したりがほ 人丸ばかり 歌よみでなし 蜀山人  
 あしひきの山屋がうどん汁もよし 長々しきをひとりすすらん 失出典

*ashibiki no yamadori no o no shidario no naganagashi yo o hitori ka mo nen hitomaro*  
*kôgen wa yamadori no ya no gotoshi naganagashiku mo nagane sen ka mo teiryû*  
*ashibiki no yamadori no o no shitarigao hitomaru bakari uta yomi de nashi shokusanjin*  
*ashibiki no yamaya ga udon-jiru mo yoshi naganagashiki o hitori susuran anonymous?*

leg-drag-mt.-bird's tail's trailing-tail's longx2 night+acc/! alone maybe/emph. sleep-will  
 light-shade-as-for mt.bird arrow resembling long-longly+emph longsleeper do-would!  
 leg-drag-mt.-bird's tail's trailing boastful-face hitomaru alone poem-composer's not  
 leg-draggng mtn shop's udon (noodle) soup/stock+emph good, singly slurp-would.

*This night that I seem bound to sleep alone will be longer still  
 than the tails trailing pheasants through the wild foot-drag hills.*

*~~~~~*  
*Light & shade as long as the shaft on pheasant-hunting arrow-heads.*  
*I, too, would be very long . . . long indeed, asleep in bed!*

*~~~~~*  
*The tails that trail the wild pheasants drag on long enough;*  
*& I'm fed up with centuries of "Waka is Hitomaru" stuff!*

*~~~~~*  
*Good, too, is the noodle stock at this foot-drag mountain shop –*  
*Long, indeed, we slurp alone and hope the slurping never stops!*

The original by Kakimoto Hitomaro (popularly Hitomaru), third in the *Hundred Poets*, was famous and doubtless well-paraversed and parodied long before the anthology was born. After all, the poet was *the* classic Japanese poet and hyperbole is catching. The first spoof, by Teiryû (c.1730), whose popularity in his day was as phenomenal as Shokusanjin in his, describes life in a mountain hollar via the proverbial arrow of time and puts in a good word for sleeping. Shokusanjin loved the subject of sleep but Teiryû having beat him to it, went another direction. Again, it concerns something beyond the content of the particular poem. It seems the literary war call of a creative editor tired of hearing platitudes. The slurping poem deserves attribution for it is delightful for all who are Japanese or used to the sound of slurping noodles, at any rate. Who knows but it was written by a poet who visited such a shop and scribbled it on a napkin to get a free second helping after which the owner glued it to a proper backing and hung it on the wall, where it was discovered by a literatae who brought it down the mountain and put it into a book that whoever graciously introduced it to the world-wide web read.

The next poem we shall see is #24, one of the lightest poems of the *Hundred*. So light, in fact, that *it* is comic. So, what will Shokusanjin do?

024 このたびは幣もとりあへず手向山 紅葉の錦神のまにまに 菅家 9c  
michizane *kono tabi wa nusa mo toriaezu tamukeyama momiji no nishiki kami no ma ni ma ni*  
 ↓ this occasion/travel-as4 prayerstrip even for now offering-hill red-leave-brocade, gods as is

*Travel is travail  
 I brought no votive poems;  
 Mount Offering*

*Wears a fall brocade, ye gods  
 I pray, accept it all, as is!*

*On top of that, as you see,  
 I have no change with me!*

このたびはぬさも取敢へず手向山まだ 其上にさい銭もなし 蜀山人 ↑  
*kono tabi wa nusa mo toriaezu tamukeyama mada sonoue ni saizeni mo nashi shokusanjin*  
 this occasn/trvl-as4 pryrstrp evn for now offering-hill also that-above smallchange even not

The first line of the original written in 898 when Sugawara no Michizane, one of the “gods of ancient Japanese poetry,” visited Tamukeyama, literally Offering-mountain, is shared by the parody and should be “On this occasion/trip” rather than “travel is travail.” In *Kokinshû*’s book 9, *Travel Poems*, it is followed by Monk Sosei: “I ought to tear a strip from my patched robe for an offering / But the gods, jaded from the colored leaves, might return it.” (たむけにはつづりの袖もきるべきにもみぢにあける神かへさむ 素性法師 古今集 #421 *tamuke ni wa tsuzuri no sode mo kiru beki ni momiji ni akeru kami ya kaesan*). As #024 was already mad, Shokusanjin simply added an Edoite snicker. The stereotypical noble, unlike a commoner, carried no small change, as he had no need for it.

~~~~~  
 The variety of parody in Japanese poetry is so great that one might easily fill a book with them, exemplifying, say, a hundred types of take-offs. Indeed, one might do that from one early-seventeenth-century book (*Nise Monogatari*, or *Fake Tales of Ise*, which has over 200+ poems parodied). As alluding to, borrowing from or commenting on other poems is, like hyperbole, not a theme but a method, there are more parodies scattered throughout the other nineteen chapters of this book, enough, that by the time you finish reading, you will have seen as many again as you see here and have a pretty good grasp of what *kyôka* parody is. Still, the fact 10% or so of *kyôka* are parody of one sort or another does not justify *kyôka* being categorically equated with it, much less being put down as a minor second-hand literature as a result. One might as well equate all English light-verse with parody simply because it was very common until the mid-20c (modern anthologies do not reflect that because few parodies, including poems written in the style of so-and-so rather than taking-off on a single poem, in old books of poetry are included by modern editors who know all too well we no longer read enough poetry to appreciate them).

To sum up the situation, we may say that most *waka* that are clearly parodies as opposed to variants of other *waka* may be called *kyôka*, but most *kyôka* cannot be called parodies by any definition of parody. *Second*, even if *kyôka* were mostly parody, the idea that parody is less creative than poems created *ex nihilo* so to speak is bunk. If anything, a parody is more likely to include a measure of linguistic or conceptual freshness than a poem its author naively believes to be entirely his or her own when anyone who reads mountains of poetry knows true novelty is rare. Parody is not respected in a country, in a culture, where this and that trite thought may be delivered and received as if it were a revelation. Think of inventions outside of language if you will. It is true that once in a while some astoundingly fresh idea so unlike anything that came before so as to require no reference to other inventions appears out of the blue, but 99% of inventions that actually gain patents are improvements on other inventions. They are, in other words, parodies. Most of the things people who do not know what has already been invented invent are re-inventions, interesting to the re-inventor to be sure, but not to people who really know the field. The same can be said for most poems by amateur poets.

In other words, acknowledging and appreciating parody rather than putting it down does not make a literary culture inferior to one that does not. Rather, it proves a high degree of literacy on the part of both the poets and the readers. Reading the parody of old Japan, a true lover of literature should think *that we should be so lucky!* But, for better or worse, such deep literacy is probably gone forever. We now live in a world which, to one familiar with what was, seems more like something that might be called pigeon, or possibly creole. Such language has its own charm, but it is not at all like that offered by a long unbroken tradition of literacy.

♪ *Issa as the top philosopher of dew.* The Kaizôsha haikai *saijiki* gives Issa so great a portion of the dew examples that one might say that Issa was indirectly recognized by at least one editor. Now, *saijiki* almanacs tend to be too egalitarian both in the space allotted to topics (the difference in # of examples is far less than in reality) and to the # of examples of a given topic allowed to one poet (not reflecting the way some poets exhaust and hence own themes) to give credit where it is due.

♪ *Shokusanjin Invents a New Genre of Meta-parody.* This is only half-right. Shokusanjin had a higher percentage of such surprising take-offs than anyone else, but a 17c *Hundred Poet* parody and Fake Ise (*Nise-monogatari*) include some such. Your translator must read more and more carefully before giving a patent to Shokusanjin. Also, that sort of meta-association is found in work by so-called *gesaku* literature masters such as Hiraga Gennai.

Water On Fire, or the Elements of Mad Love

君こふる涙しなくば唐衣 むねのあたりは色もえなまし 紀つらゆき 古今集 #572
kimi kouru namida shi nakuba karagoromo mune no atari wa iro moenamashi ki no tsurayuki
you longing tears +emph. not-if chinese robe breast's area-as-for color/desire burn-would c 905

*But for these tears I shed for you, the silk above my breast
Would burst into flame as red as a Chinese dress!*

In Vain, My Love?

*But for these tears I shed for you, the red of my Chinese dress
Would burst into flame in that area just above my breast!*

In Japanese, the metaphor of burning passion is fortified by orthographical coincidence: “love,” *kohi*, or thoughts of it, *omohi* (now, respectively, *koi* & *omoi*) both include “fire,” *hi*. The first reading takes Chinese dress, *karagoromo*, for a simile. The second follows Rodd+Henkenius (“*but for the tears of / unrequited love that / gently stream for you / my Chinese robe would burn red / over my feverish breast*”) in translating *karagoromo* literally, but, as it was known for its bright reds, gave what was there already, the additional property of burning. *Kara*, meaning “Chinese,” may homophonically evoke an “empty=*kara*” shell of oneself, i.e., loving in “vain;” hence my title, also intended to bring out the humor – *wasted tears doing some good by keeping passion from burning out of control* (by removing trace elements, tears shed from emotion *do* have calming properties). If this poem, by *Kokinshû*’s editor Tsurayuki, is not generally considered a *kyôka*, it is only because such language was too common in love to be “mad.” The first 100% mad fire in the breast awaits old Monk Sôchô (1448-1532), whose paper robe actually caught fire when he slept below the *kotatsu*, a sort of combined heater and table:

*“Morning dawned / with nothing to show for the fire / that coursed
through my breast / and my robe as well – / what an awful night!”
(toru tokoro . . . trans. H. Mack Horton: 2002).*

Sôchô took advantage of Ono no Komachi’s poem (*hito ni awa . . . kks #1030*), where she wakes up with flames of passion barbecuing her heart. She and Sôchô used an uncommon phrase 胸走り火 *mune-hashiribi*, meaning “pectoral-wildfire,” where the “wild” in Japanese is literally “running” and becomes “coursed through” in Horton’s good translation.

♪ R & H’s “unrequited,” “gently stream for you” and “feverish” explain and pad to fill out the requisite number of syllables. Because your translator provides those ugly glosses, you can see what is or is added or lost. With others’ translations, you cannot. In other words, I am not the only one adding & subtracting, just the only one doing it openly!

朝夕に竈はなれぬ老猫の恋にはあらぬ身を焦すらん 一茶 文化 11
 asa-yû ni kamado-hanarenu rô-neko no koi ni wa aranu mi o kogasu-ran issa
 morning-night-in stove leave/s-not old cat's love-for is-not body+acc. burn+emph.

♪ Day in, day out, ♪
 ne'er leaving the stove
 Old Tom, you leave no doubt
 even one who does not rove
 for love can still get burnt!

Even when cats in heat do not disturb us in the dead of night, they may infuriate some not doing it themselves at the time. Don't be envious! Not all cats are eager to join the fray. Old Toms may be tired; young Toms afraid. And, cats, despite their willingness to play in the snow, do, indeed, love heat. In Japan, where central heating is uncommon, a cat that finds a source of heat may hang on to it like a man on a life-raft. One cat sank her claws into a felt-covered hot-water-bottle-sized electric heater bought to keep the author's computer from fogging over. The phrase "you leave no doubt," compensates for the unEnglishable suffix on the last verb, "ran," an audible exclamation with a grin or a laugh in it. Issa's *kyôka* contains no obvious allusions or borrowings, but plays with the whole concept of *love-as-burning*, and it no more left his journal, than his cat left the stove.

O O

O O O

中々二 如何知兼 吾山尔 焼流火氣能 外見申尾 万葉集 # 3033
 nakanaka ni nani ka? shirikemu waga yama ni moyuru kemuri no soto ni mimashi o
 rashly why? know[+done & bad] my mount.-at burning smoke's outside-by see-would+rather!

O O O O O O O

\ \ \ \ / / / /
 volcano
 \ \ \ / /
 fire & ash,
 i was rash!
 just once with you
 was once too much
 I'd rather sit back and watch
 another woman's heart erupt!

This 8c *Manyôshû waka*, left in its *Manyô* script (100% Chinese characters) lacks the nominal *hi*, or "fire" found in Tsurayuki's later poem. Rather than *kohi* (longing/desiring) or *omohi* (longing/worrying), love here is Biblically expressed, *i.e.*, as *knowing* (知 *shiri*). The poem was not with the comic odds & ends (*mys* bk.16), but elsewhere with a score of poems

“expressing thoughts by reference to things 寄物陳思.” Needless to say, hyperbolic metaphor is comical for the reader even if the poet was serious. “Sit back” was added to capture the strong emotion of the “rather” implied in that trailing “o.” A paraverse of the same in the style of Dorothy Parker:

*See the volcano blow its top!
I wish it were not me.
And had we never met, my dear,
It wouldn't be.*

More such may be found in *A Dolphin In the Woods* (2009), but to return to the subject, nominally burning passion, Cranston's *Shûishû* (c.1005) translations (in *Waka* v.2) include song #597, which he translates,

*“The furious gods / Also know the flames of love: / Must it not be so,
/ That across the endless years / The mountain Fuji burns?”*

This was among poems attributed to the legendary poet Kakimoto no Hitomaro (fl.680-700). Cranston notes that its usage of the *fire* pun on the letter *hi* in *omohi* (*kami mo omoi no areba koso*) proves it to actually be post-9c. He also translates an allegorical *Manyôshû* #1336 (*fuyu-gomori haru no . . .*), where a woman, content with hibernating, rhetorically asks, or, rather, complains of a spring field-burner – *that's* a fireman for you! –

“Can he never burn enough, / That now he sets fire to my heart?”

It, too, has no pun, indeed no *koi* or *omoi* at all, just “*my heart (he) burns*” (*waga kokoro yaku*). So, we may ask, with fires in fields and mountains associated with passion, *why* was that found within *words* not taken advantage of in the *Manyôshû*? Was it because *parts* of words were rarely punned at this time? Or, was “*hi*” simply more likely to be punned as “sad” than “fire,” for *Manyô* script often wrote *koi* as 孤悲, literally, “solitude+sadness? Or was it because water, rather than *fire*, dominated as the natural element of love for ancient Japanese, with lots of ocean, stream, wave, shore and seaweed metaphors (Aren't our guts more likely to swim than burn?)? Some attained considerable allegorical complexity – Cranston translates one where the “heart” is a water plant that bobs in the current by the shore neither coming in nor going out. He notes that it “*captures the meaningless though not unpleasant motion of a love affair that is going nowhere.*” Perhaps. Then again, who says he isn't sea-sick and wishing with Willie (Nelson), “♪ *If you can't say you love me, say you hate me . . .* ♪”? . . . Regardless, it is an extraordinary metaphor!

We'll continue for a while with the lesser element, *fire*, before getting wet.

あなうなぎいづくの山のいもとせをさかれてのちに身をこがすとは 四方赤良
 ana unagi izuku no yama no imo to se o sakarete nochi ni mi o kogasu to wa yomo no akara
 pitiful=hole(waterhole)-eel, eventually's mountain-potato(a long thin variety)=girlfriend &
 boyfriend=back(of a body)+acc. // split/separating after body/self+acc. roast/burn-as-for

♪ *The Spitchcock Blues* ♪

*Poor country girl
 and boy after the fashion
 of eels are split,
 For roasting on the coals
 of their very own passion!*

*My poor Unagi,
 born of wild potato, split
 down your back,
 How sweet parting hurts
 when you're burnt black!*

Mad poets had to be very inventive to outdo the flaming hearts of ancient *waka*, with their volcanoes, fireflies and moths and create truly novel fire metaphor. This poem, one of the three most cited *kyôka* (万載 1783) by the most famous *kyôka* poet – Yomo no Akara = Shokusanjin = Ôta Nanpo – succeeds in doing just that. The *Spitchcock Blues* (my title) has probably never been translated. *Why?* Because the reading, like the eel, must be split. At least, this translator could not keep it whole, as in the original, and had to settle for a composite translation. The eel's original form, the “potato,” *imo*, is homophonous with “little-sister,” or *girlfriend*. The variety mentioned, the *unagi*, a relatively flat “common eel,” is split open from the belly for roasting in most of Japan, but in Kantô, which is to say greater Edo (now, Tokyo) it was split *from the back* as required for the pun – a *boyfriend* is a “back,” *se*, short for “my baby,” *waga seko*, or rather *papoose*, for that is how they are carried. The roast indirectly boasts “this is how we make mad poems in the new capital city!” Nanpo did not, however, invent the odd metamorphosis. It was part of folklore for hundreds of years and, like most such long-held folk beliefs, supported by many old reports of half-eel-half-potatoes with specific names and places.

夏やせと人にはかくす苦しさよ我胸の火のあつさまけをも 蝸光 同 雑恋
 natsuyase to hito ni wa kakusu kurushisa yo waga mune no hi no atsusa-make o mo
 “summer-wasting” people-to-as4 hiding painfulness! my breast's fire's heat-losing though

*How I suffer when I cover up – “It's only the summer thins.”
 I really cannot take the heat of passion burning from within!*

In *waka*, growing thin from lovesickness was sometimes explained away as summer-thinning (a malady suffered by most of the population in pre-modern times). Coupling that with heat from longing and trying to hide it took a stroke of genius. Unfortunately, the translation of this uncelebrated Tenmei *kyôka* by a poet whose name translates as Snail-shine suffers for

lack of English words for *summer-thinning* and *heat-losing* (failure to take the heat); the fortuitous English idiom “cover up” only partially makes up for it. This is not to say that English does not have its own ways of expressing passion as fire, not all of which would Japanese. For, even without the *omo(h)i* and *ko(h)i* puns putting *fire* into all love, “our” poets were perfect pyromaniacs of passion. Addison gave the following examples of what he called “mixt wit,” with “foundations . . . laid partly in falsehood [pun] and partly in truth [ideas],” from Cowley’s poems in his well-known essay of *True and False Wit*,

..

Cowley observing the cold regard of his mistress’s eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, considers them as burning-glasses made of ice; and finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. When his mistress had read his letter written in juice of lemon, by holding it to the fire, he desires her to read it over a second time by love’s flame. When she weeps, he wishes it were inward heat that distilled those drops from the limbes. When she is absent, he is beyond eighty, that is, thirty degrees nearer the pole than when she is with him. His ambitious love is a fire that naturally mounts upwards; his happy love is the beams of heaven, and his unhappy love flames of hell. When it does not let him sleep, it is a flame that sends up no smoke; when it is opposed by counsel and advice, it is a fire that rages the more by the winds blowing upon it. Upon the dying of a tree, in which he had cut his loves, he observed that his written flames had burnt up and withered the tree. When he resolves to give over his passion, he tells us, that one burnt like him for ever dreads the fire. His heart is an Etna, that instead of Vulcan’s shop, encloses Cupid’s forge in it. His endeavouring to drown his love in wine, is throwing oil upon the fire. He would insinuate to his mistress, that the fire of love, like that of the sun (which produces so many living creatures,) should not only warm, but beget. Love in another place cooks pleasure at his fire. Sometimes the poet’s heart is frozen in every breast, and sometimes scorched in every eye. Sometimes he is drowned in tears, and burnt in love, like a ship set on fire in the middle of the sea. The reader may observe in every one of these instances, that the poet mixes the qualities of fire with those of love; and in the same sentence, speaking of it both as a passion and as real fire, surprises the reader with those seeming resemblances or contradictions, that make up all the wit in this kind of writing.

Despite giving grudging admission to mixt wit as valid, Addison none-the-less pronounced its “*only province*” as the “*epigram, or those little occasional poems, that in their own nature are nothing else but a tissue of epigrams.*” Since most *kyôka* wit is *mixed* – pun and concept – and all *kyôka* are short enough to be epigrams, one might say that the mad poems in this book have the great essayist’s mark of approval. Now, let us return to them and move on to the wet side of passion, tears.

~~~~~

棒ほどな涙ながして今ははや 恋のをも荷をになふ斗ぞ 黒田月洞軒 大団 c.1700  
 bô hodo na namida nagashite ima wa haya koi no omoni o ninau bakari zo kuroda getsudôken  
 pole amount of tears flowing/ed now-as-for already love/blues burden+acc bear amount+emph.

*From mine Eyes  
 stream Tears like Poles,  
 & they grow thick  
 Enough to bear the Burden  
 of a Love no longer quick.*

*The tears flowing  
 from my eyes made poles  
 thick enough now  
 To bear a sedan in which  
 my lovesick blues can sit!*

*Tears from my eyes  
 flowed down like sticks, a pair!  
 Now, grown to poles,  
 They're thick enough to bear  
 Love's blue burden of despair.*

People familiar with old *waka* do not bat an eye when they come across lovers carried off or drowned in their own tears, but flowing so thickly as to solidify into poles strong enough for portage, well that *is* not only unusual but probably unique; and, because Getsudôken and his poems have not received the attention they deserve, a hyperbole as fresh today as the day it was invented. So saying, there is *one* older (skks) poem by the fifty-eighth retired Emperor where tears and *pole* fuse so beautifully it would be a crime not to introduce, though no translation can do it justice.

涙のみうき出づる蟹の釣竿の長き夜すがら恋ひつつぞぬる 光孝院 #1355  
 namida nomi (=no mi) uki-izuru ama no tsurizao no nagaki yosugara koi-tsutsu zo nuru kôkô-in  
 waves/teary only=body floatng-up shellfishr's gig/harvestng-pole's lengthy nght-lng lngng-while sleep

*Teary me, a diver pops up from the sea, her shellfish pole  
 Long but not so long as this night of longing for my soul.*

~~~~~  
*Through this night, long as the gig of a diver up from the deep
 floating on my bed of tears soaked with longing, I would sleep.*

The *mi* with the *no* can mean “only” (I’m *all* tears) but becomes *myself* after a body is implied by floating up – *uki*, homophonous with being *depressed*. A diver’s long pole/gig brings to mind the mountain-bird’s long tail on Hitomaro’s famous poem (pg.72) about such a night. This is less parody than improvement. The pole used for hard work in the cold sea evokes the “sleep,” *nuru*, homophonous with *wet* that takes us back to the teary start. Retired Emperor Kôkô’s poem belongs here not only as a note to Getsudôken’s poem and an example of hyperbole in its own right but as a beautiful *waka* that would be a *kyôka* were it not about longing.

人こふる事をおもにとになひもてあふごなきこそわびしかりけれ
 hito kouru koto o omoni to ninaimote augo naki koso wabishikarikere anon
 person yearn-4 thing+acc weight-as carry/shouldrng meet=erryngpole-not esp. miserble

*I carried the burden of my yearning for him, a girl without a pole.
 How hard to bear that wait, alone, when someone does not show!*

~~~~~  
*Love's a burden until you meet and get it out of your hair  
 Like carrying water without a pole, it is hard to bear!*

As poles and portage went together in the Sinosphere, using them to carry the burden of love is not surprising. The many variations suggest this poem arose from folksong, but the pun on *carrying-pole* = *augo* = *rendezvous* is what makes all work in the original, which is genderless. As heavy things, such as water, generally carried by poles, were often born by women, your translator made Anonymous a girl, while R&H, both women, translated: "his yearning love he / bears like a heavy burden / on his shoulders like / a porter without a pole — / no meeting eases his lot." Be that as it may, the immediate precedent for Getsudôken's poem may be the following *kyôka* from the 1679 *Silver Leaf Savage Songs* 銀葉夷歌集:

捨られぬ衆道女道をになひなは 恋の重荷に棒やおれなん 春澄  
 suterarenu shudô nyodô o ninahinaba koi no omoni ni bô ya orenan shunjô

~~*If you must bear the burden of loving boys and women  
 Break it off, break the pole which makes you carry them!*~~

~~~~~  
*If you can give up neither your longing for boys nor for women
 Love's twin burden will break the pole by which you carry them!*

While a phallic undertone is to some degree unavoidable, trouble reading obsolete grammar (sure *looked* imperative) ruined my first translation and explanation (~~Getsudôken who did not wish to be a monk, kept that pole, but admitting love was not free, let his tears as poles bear his burden.~~) As Getsudôken was bisexual, all he had to do was add the tears! And, following the pole of Getsudôken's *kyôka*, we lost them. Back to tears:

..
 hitorine no toko ni tamareru namida ni wa ishi no makura mo ukinubera nari
 single-sleep-to bed-in gather tears-by-as-for stone-pillow/s even float-up/away be

When I sleep alone, / In my bed the tears collect, / And on such a tide /
 Even a pillow of stone / Will surely rise and float. tr. Cranston 2a

*The teary flood that fills the bed of one who sleeps alone
 Can levitate a pillow, though it be of stone!*

This and the next, also by Anon., are among selections from *Kokin waka-rokujô* 古今和歌六帖 (c.985) made by Edwin Cranston (waka 2a).

Nakitsumeshi fuyu no namida wa kôri ni ki token haruhi wa mi mo ya nagaren
 cried packed-in winter tears-as4 froze-to-came+emph melt-will spring-sun/day-as4

Cranston tr.: The winter tears / That I wept a riverful / Have frozen solid; /
 When the thaws of spring begin, / Will my whole body flow away?

*The tears I cried all winter-long are frozen en masse;
 On a sunny spring day, will I just melt and run away?*

There is no explicit *sea* in the first poem or river in the second but Cranston probably fills in what does indeed lie between the lines.

君がせぬわが手まくらは草なれや涙の露の夜な夜なぞ置く 光孝院 skks #1349
kimi ga senu waga tamakura wa kusa nare ya namida no tsuyu no yo na yo na zo oku mitsutaka?
 you/lord/dear do-not my arm-pillow-as4, grass became tear-dew's night after night+emph sets c1205

*The pillow your arm did not make made mine turn into grass
 Night after night, tears run like dew, settling en masse.*

The implication here is that the poet did not meet her and had to sleep outside (not likely for a retired Emperor) or had to travel ("Grass-pillow," was a conceit for it) away from her because he was sick with longing. Dew tears were probably introduced by the poet for an allusion to having not even a dewdrop's worth of a chance. The *Shinkokinshû* editor put the following poem after it:

露ばかり置くらむ袖はたのまれず涙の川の瀧つせなれば 無名#1350 読人不知
tsuyu bakari okuramu sode wa tanomarezu namida no kawa no takitsu senareba anon
 dew only/amount setting sleeve-as-for depend-cannot, tear-river-waterfalls do-not-if

*Who can trust a lonely sleeve that is only wet with dew?
 I'm looking for a flood – A cataract of tears from you.*

Playing on the quality of natural phenomena, together they echo a *waka* exchange in the *Tales of Ise* where a would-be lover blames a woman for his tears and gets his come-uppance when she says that if he was *really* crying for her, he would weep so hard it would have swept him far away.

..

涙川身も浮きぬべき寝覚かなはかなき夢のなごりばかりに 寂蓮 skks
namidagawa mi mo ukinu beki nesame kana hakanaki yume no nagori bakari ni jakuren
 tear-rvr body/self float-seems awakenng!/: transient/empty drms/s' detritus only-to #1385

*Down a river of tears I float and waking find I'm washed ashore
 Alone with the detritus of my dreams and nothing more.*

Having grown-up by the sea-shore, the translator could not help adding said body of water to both readings in the 740-page *Monster: A River of Tears swept me downstream, then out to Sea – / Beached, I awoke with*

nothing but the detritus of dreams. and River of Tears, it carries you out to sea, but then you wake /alone with nothing but the flotsam and jetsam of dreams. Jakuren's poem is probably the most beautiful tear-river poems ever written. Let us see some waka as comic as kyôka:

みなれかはわたすをふねに ことつてむ 涙にうくと 君にしらせよ 藤原章綱
 minaregawa watasu o fune ni kotozuten namida ni uku to kimi ni shirase yo akitsuna
 wetness-used-to-river (p.n.?) crossing boat-to words-transmit! tears-upon floating you-to tell

*I'm stuck in a river and the river is me someone call a boat!
 And tell my love her sweetheart upon his tears doth float!*

Absent a word comparable to *minare*, “used to being waterlogged” this folksy Tear River may be untranslatable as poetry. The *existence* of this one marvelous word eclipses all 200 varieties of Inuit snow, and attached to river, *i.e.*, Minare-gawa, creates something simultaneously river *and* body. What is Mr. Lakoff's entire book of metaphor compared to this? The contradictions in the poem surfaced all too plainly in my first translation: “*I may be soaked already but . . . Someone, won't you call a boat! / I'd cross this stream – and go tell my Dear that here on tears I float!*”

かくはかりせきわつらはは なみたかは みやこのかたへ なかれいらなむ 長方
 kakubakari sekiwazurawaba namidagawa miyako no kata e nagare-iranamu nagakata?
 thatmuch checkpoint bothered(by) tear-river capital's person-to flowing enter not?

*With checkpoints
 causing us so much grief,
 River of Tears,*

*Why not just keep running
 to Kyôto – grab their ears!*

*If the checkpoints
 are causing so much grief
 you cry, you'd best*

*Get thy Twin Rivers to run
 to the Capital for redress!*

Gain in translation! Japanese rivers and watches do not “run.” Here, as is often the case, cultural loss is no problem, so long as it is explained. It is enough to know that curfews and checkpoints around cities and within them made life hard for separated lovers. The poem also suggests that the capital had clout. It is uncertain whether the tears are addressed directly or not. If it is the sad lover talking to his own tear rivers, the poem is a classic *kyôka*. But, with Japanese poets writing from the point of view of either sex, and the person being impossible to know for sure, a second reading that assumes a woman in the Capital kids a lover stuck in the boondocks whom she does not necessarily want calling on her is also possible. And other interpretations are possible. That is why many Japanese short poems may be read many times. Be that as it may, the idea of putting Tear River to work is about as mad as mad can be. All that is needed is a water-wheel. And your translator bets one can actually be found in Edo period *kyôka*.

もの思ふ涙や やがてみつせ河 人をしづむる淵となるらむ 西行 同
mono-omou namida ya yagate mitsusegawa hito o shizumuru fuchi to naruramu saigyô
 thing-thinking tears!/: eventually mitsuse river person+acc sink/drown depth/pool-into become

*Tears of longing pool, and by and by, leave one in a fix
 deep enough a man can drown and cross the River Styx.*

This *waka* is well-known but the odd mix of metaphor is oddly ignored because Saigyô is known as a great *waka* poet and not as what your translator finds him to be, namely, the King of metaphor and Emperor of trope. He crossed figures of speech as easily as the Tenmei *kyôka* poets. Who but Saigyô could grow a river that must be crossed by the dead and have someone drown in a deep spot in it, or what might seem to be it but isn't really. *Mitsu*, part of the name of the river, Mitsusegawa, is a homophone for "to deepen."

いまはとて なみたのうみに 櫂をたえ 沖にわつらふ けさの舟ひと 後京極攝政夫木
ima wa tote namida no umi ni kaji o tae oki ni wazurau kesa no funabito go-kyôgoku 1169-1206
 now-as-for and/say, tear-ocean-in rudder+acc end/broken/lost, offshore distressed morning's boatman

*Sailor on a sea of tears at dawn and what's more,
 rudder broken off, now, I cannot come ashore!*

So, now, we are at sea. This is the love lament equivalent of being up shit-creek without a paddle. Again, we see a *waka* with a metaphor ridiculous enough in its complexity to be a *kyôka* that deserves to be famous but isn't.

君なくて ひとりぬる夜の 床島は 寄するなみたそ いやしきりなる よみびとしらず
kimi nakute hitori nuru yo no tokoshima wa yosuru namida zo iya shigerinaru anon. 夫木 1310
 you/lord/dear not, alone sleepng night's bed-island-as4 approach tears+emph yuck/emph. frequent be

♪ *The Castaway's Lament* ♪

*Without my love
 marooned at night, my bed
 becomes an isle;*

*Tears in waves erode the shore,
 I'll be swimming in a while.*

..

Desperately kicking to keep this masterpiece afloat, the translator first tried: *Without you, dear, marooned each night upon my Island Bed, / buffeted by tears, I shake: You'll find me swimming soon . . . or dead.* The loss in translation (*sleep=nuru=wet(yourself)* and *tears=nami⇒namida=waves*) was too much, so the poem was exiled to the notes until the *isle/while* rhyme brought it a reprieve. The *swimming*, not in the original, makes up in part for what can not be ferried across the linguistic divide.

さゆるよにおつれはこほる なみたこそ まくらのもとの あられなりけれ 俊成
 sayuru yo ni otsureba kôru namida koso makuranomoto no arare narikere shunzei 1114-
 chilled night-on falling freeze tears esp. pillow/bed's base's hailstones become -1204

*On a cold night when any Tears that drop, freeze in the air,
 Look around my Pillow and you will see Hailstones there.*

~~~~~  
*I do not know exactly when my iced-up tears thawed out;  
 But I, for one, can tell – Spring came early, beyond doubt.*

when tear-ice breaks/broke-apart year-within-in+emph. spring-as-4 arrives-ought 1155-  
 itsushika to namida no kôri uchitokete toshinouchi ni zo haru wa tatsubeki jien -1225  
 いつしかとなみたのこほりうちとけて としのうちにそはるはたつへき 慈円

Shunzei, above, had spectacular *icicle* tears as well. If only *slush* (*mizore*) can be found, he will have covered all the salient tears of winter. Jien's spring "within-the-year=*toshi-no-uchi*" poem, madder than first apparent, reverses the usual causality: his thawing tears gauge the calendar rather than following it. Both of the above come from the *Fuboku* anthology which did not forget Saigyô's lachrymal masterpiece which I'll couple with one by Izumi Shikibu and chase both down by something that is more lyrical than romantic to end what amounts to a survey of *waka* tears:

よしさらば涙の池に身をなして こころのままに月をやどさむ 西行  
 yoshi saraba namida no ike ni mi o nashite kokoro no mama ni tsuki o yadosamu saigyô  
 well be-it-if tear-pond-into body/self becoming heart/will-as moon+acc lodge-would-not-do!

*In that case, I'll turn myself into a pond of tears,  
 And put up the Moon, when and where I please!*

~~~~~  
*As my tears like dew-drops beyond all telling cling,
 I may have to wear my pearls for camouflaging!*

numbers are-not (beyond count) tears' dew+acc wearing+emph. gem-adornment add+emph think
 kazu naranu namida no tsuyu o kakete dani tama no kazari o soemu to zo omou shikibu
 かすならぬ なみたのつゆをかけてたに たまのかさをそへむとそおもふ 式部

..

Saigyô's poem is loosely translated. The translator has tighter readings elsewhere and feels free to play here. Shikibu (d.1030) does not actually mention camouflage, but her readers would have immediately understood *that* was what she meant. Look at the gloss. Would you have gotten it?

なきかへる かりのなみたの つもるをや 苗代みつに 人はせくらむ 好忠 夫木
 naki kaeru kari no namida no tsumoru o ya nawashiro mizu ni hito wa sekuramu yoshitada
 cry/calling geese'tears' building-up+emph. (rice)paddies water-in people-as-for dam-up

*And off they fly, crying as they go – could it be our paddies
 are made by damming streams of tears left by those geese?*

After scores of love poems, natural(?) tears must be a relief. *Naki kaeru* might also mean “frogs cry” but that’s a long-shot. Now, finally, a *kyôka*:

わすられし男日てりの我宿に 泪の雨のさりとては又 酒月米人 一萬集 寄雨恋
wasurareshi otoko-hideri no waga yado ni namida no ame no saritote wa mata sakazuki no
 forgotten, men-drought’s my lodge-in tears-of rain anyway once-again komendo 1783?

Love & Rain

*Long forgotten, I suffer at home from a drought of men;
 Not that I lack for water, with my endless rain of tears!*

One Chinese character, 寄, suffices to show that a large subject, *Love*, is “approached” or “drawn together” with various things. Above, it is rendered “&.” “A drought of men,” referring to locales where the men are all away for seasonal employment, is found in Issa’s haiku of this time. The *kyôka* poet is a man, doing what is common in all genre of Japanese literature and song, writing from the perspective of a woman.

気こんよく若衆ぐるひの春あそび めでたし老のやれ恥しらず 月洞軒
ki konyoku wakashu-gurui no haru asobi medetashi rô no yare haji shirazu getsudôken
 spirit persistently wakashu-crazinss/frenzy’s sprng play jyfl/propitius age’s hooray shame knws-nt

又春毎に自剃を祝てつかはしければ
 ♪ *My annual New Year Toast to Jizori* ♪

*What could bring more joy to spring than having a wakashu fling!
 Old age knows no shame, hooray! So, party on, persist, be gay!*

~~~~~  
*Let’s keep it up – that wakashu frenzy we call spring play!  
 Be joyful & free (be thee): old Age knows no shame, I say!*

自剃かたより 逆術をせんにならば瓢箪から駒出す手間で若衆だせかしと云こしける返し  
 へふたんととてもうかれれば若しゅうの尻から駒をほり出しにせよ 月洞軒  
*hyôtan to totemo ukareba wakashû no shiri kara koma o horidashi ni se yo getsudôken*  
 gourd with very excited/carried-away-if youngcrowd’s butt-from pony dig-up do! c.1700

When Jizori wrote that if montebiancs could charm ponies from gourds with magic, the same effort should bring him a *wakashu*, I replied

*So long as we’re thinking out of the gourd, wouldn’t you  
 rather have that pony dug from the ass of a wakashu?*

..  
 Homosexual love was one place *kyôka* went where *waka* feared to tread. *Haikai* is another matter. *Haikai* is full of it. But early ink-verse *haikai* was seldom personal. These poems going to a friend are, in that sense, part

of the *waka* tradition which, correctly understood, includes *kyôka*. Friendship is not identical with love, but to have put the first of the above poems in the *Sex Chapter* would have been wrong and we do not have a chapter for *friendship*. And the second poem? A *wakashu*, or gay youth's behind was the most desired derrière in Japan. Getsudôken, who seems to have been bi-sexual, plays with that object in an exceedingly good-natured way. Gourds, by the way, are the Sinosphere's equivalent of the hat from which we would pull our rabbits and release our doves.

間男がくべき宵とて背戸にゆき いたづらおかた蜘蛛の巣をとる 月洞軒 大団  
*maotoko ga kubeki yoi tote seto ni yuki itazura okata kumo no su o toru getsudôken*  
 male-lover/gigolo comes-ought-evening because, backdoor-to going  
 prank-loving-palace-lady spider-web+acc. removes

*That night a lover?  
 Out the backdoor this joking lady heads  
 to carefully remove all of her rival's spider webs!*

The lady's man Sanekata seven hundred years earlier kidded a woman for failing to guess he was coming. If the spider did not predict his coming, then she must not be sincere. That was in a retort to a harsh letter from the lady. Here, Getsudôken would seem to be imagining life in the Imperial court. Rather than purloining the message, cut the telegraph lines. Nothing is said about a rival, but with many women sleeping with few – sometimes just one – men, that is a given. Unlike his poems for Jizori, this is a typical, purely comic work.

一夜寝し妹がかたみと思ふにはうつり虱もつぶされもせず 宿屋飯盛り  
*hitoyo neshi imo ga katami to omou ni wa utsurijirami mo tsubusare mo sezu meshimori*  
 one-night slept sis/sweetheart's keepsake-as think-as-for caught-lice even squash+emph will-not

*The only keepsake from our one-night stand, how nice . .  
 – thinking of her, I prefer not to pop my pubic lice!*

.. This *kyôka* by Tenmei *kyôka*-master Meshimori was caught in Kaneko Jitsuei's introduction to a collection of Shokusanjin's poems (*Shokusanankashû*). It has more in common with Marvel's flea that mixed the lover and his mistress's blood, than Issa's fleas, adorable because, "because they slept with me" or Getsudôken's more personal work. It is suitably outrageous, but hardly novel. It is, however, improved by the (male) poet's name 宿屋飯盛, literally *Inn wench*. Such a 'wench' could be so helpful (foot-washing, sewing, cooking, massage, and sometimes . . . ) that a traveler might indeed feel more than sentimental about a one-night stand. It is here to show that 19c poets could write in the simple style of Getsudôken. But how successful were they in making it personal?

うかうかと長き夜すがらあくがれて 月に鼻毛の数やよまれん 節松 嫁嫁  
 ukauka to nagaki yosugara akugarete tsuki ni hanage no kazu ya yomaren fushimatsu no kaka  
 carelessly long night-through longing, moon-by/(light)in nose-hairs' number+emph read-would

..

~~~~~(1)~~~~~  
*Lolling about the whole night long I'm smitten by the moon;
 Handsome will count the hair in my nose and leave me in a ruin.*

~~~~~(2)~~~~~  
*Forgetting yourself the whole night long, besotted by the moon  
 soon she'll read your nostril hair and you will play her tune!*

~~~~~(3)~~~~~  
*Lolling about from dusk to dawn in love that's how it goes,
 In the moonlight, one can count every hair within a nose!*

~~~~~(4)~~~~~  
*Putsing away a whole night in adoration? Take care,  
 in moon-light, the girls can read your nostril hair!*

~~~~~(5)~~~~~  
*Absentmindedly, all through the night, admiring
 the harvest moon can count your nostril hairs.*
 ~~~~~

The last, by Rokuo Tanaka, I deparsed.

*Nostril-hair-counting* means paying rapt attention to one's superior, or in a mistress's case, one's sugar-daddy. Why so many readings? Because the identity of the counter is ambiguous if not contradictory. A moon-viewer looks up at the beloved heavenly body from the lowly perspective of the hair-reader. On the other hand, moon light shines down or rather up the nostrils, as looking up we lean back. *Reading 1)* assumes the poet Fushimatsu no Kaka, or The Unkempt Wife, one of the top two female Tenmei era *kyōka*-masters, is the protagonist and the moon a fair man, the man in the moon 桂男 (*katsurao*) was considered to be dangerously good-looking lady's man. The *ruin* is purely rhyme – but doesn't staying up all night do that to you? *Reading 2)* assumes the poem is addressed to the poet's husband, Akera Kankō, for male poets tended to stay up all night moon-viewing. The language (*yosugura*) can not help but allude to Bashō's well-known haiku of all-night (*yomosugura*) moon-viewing while circling a pond, and thus kiddingly wonders if the nature of her husband Akera Kankō of *Revealing-loin-cloth* fame and his friends' moon-viewing was not less pure than that of the famous aesthete. *Reading 3)* is left personless but based on a guess the poet recalls moon-viewing with her husband. *Reading 4)* is the preferred reading. The moon, like Autumn leaves, was an excuse for men to go out and paint the town and Kankō's cool *kaka*, ever the sophisticate in the good and not bad meaning of the word, was cleverly warning him not to paint himself into a corner with

some coquette. *Reading 5*) is by Rokuo Tanaka (2006). His translation does not quite match his preface: “*she is bantering with a flirting man*” but Tanaka has done something fascinating here. His “harvest moon” – the unspecified moon is by convention that of mid-fall – serves as the object of admiration *and* a seeing subject, in turn. That is, he reproduces a Japanese-style pivot-word, though, to be fair to the poet, the original does not require one to ignore grammar. In the end, none of the five readings captures the fine way the Unkempt Wife plays with “moon and blossoms” (*tsuki ni hana*), a combination suggesting the lifelong aesthetic pursuit of the poet (favoring readings that it is addressed to her husband), before the would-be blossoms become a *nose* for the hair that follows. But the biggest problem is sexing the moon.

..

*Forgetting myself the whole night long I'm stuck on one so fair,  
The moon, my Laurel Man, must have read my nostril hair!*

~~~~~  
*Forgetting yourself the whole night long stuck on one so fair;
My man, beware, your Luna reads your every nostril hair!*

Which is it? My respondent favors the Moon-as-Katsurao, which is to say the Laurel Man. “Laurel” is a traditional translation. The *katsuragi* (says Wiki) has but two species, the sole members of a monotypic family native to Japan and China. In other words, it is no “laurel.” It has similar leaves but they are opposite not alternate, and boasts bright autumn color, “*a mix of bright yellow, pink and orange-red.*” And, those leaves emit a scent “*resembling burnt brown sugar or cotton candy*” (ditto). Now, color and scent were *the* words of traditional Japanese eros. Take these two *kyôka*, one written almost a hundred years earlier by Getsudôken *in place of a woman* 女にかはりてよみて送る sent where he does not say, and the other by another Tenmei era female poet, or someone using a female name, for one never knows unless the poet is famous. First, Getsudôken as a woman:

あまりじゃの秋の夜毎の色ごのみ 月のかつらの男よけれど 月洞軒 大団
amari ja no aki no yo-goto no irogonomi tsuki no katsura no otoko yokeredo c.1700
too much is's fall nights-every's color-taste (prurient interst) moon's ktsra man good-but

*There is too much, just too much sex on the mind these autumn nights
Not that we don't find him, the Man in the Moon a pretty sight.*

~~~~~  
*Night after night in fall, there's just too much sex to ignore!  
That is not to say Katsura, our moon man, is not to die for!*

~~~~~  
*Night after night, you men ruin Fall with all your dirty passion,
Though I must say Katsura does turn me on in fashion!*

As always, Getsudôken as easy with vernacular as any Tenmei era poet, is in a class of his own. The slangy “sex on the mind” and “to die for” reflect his unusual informality rare even in supposedly free *kyôka*. And now a poem from the representative Tenmei *kyôka* collection:

ひとりねの蚊帳のうちへさよふけて桂男の入るは無遠慮 きし女 徳和
hitori ne no kachô no uchi e sayo fukete katsurao no hairu wa muenryo kishijo 1785
 single-sleep's mosquito-net's inside-to night late katsura man's entering-as-for impolite

*Coming right into the mosquito net of one who sleeps alone
 and late at night, moon-man Katsurao is most impolite!*

Does this settle the reading on Kaka's poem? No. When the moon was stripped of its cloudy garments and called “the beauty of the world” for not having to wear make-up, this translator also made him/her a woman. At the time, Edo was changing from a bisexual to a monosexual notion of beauty. Rokuo Tanaka definitely chose Luna over the Laurel man. “*Men may spend the whole night gazing absently at the full moon. This looks as though the moon is teasing them, just as women can tease them.*” So far so good (though one wonders if men have ever really done that), but when he continues, referring to her more famous poem protesting her husband's long stay in Yoshiwara “*This interpretation leads the reader to an understanding of Fushimatsu no Kaka's poignant criticism (written from the point of view of a woman who is not free to leave the house at night) of men drifting in the Floating World of pleasure and indulgence all night long,*” I must protest. There are indeed reports of moon-viewing parties held by Tenmei *kyôka* poets that lasted for days, but women, especially poets married to poets, were usually not excluded. It is premature to judge this moon-viewing poem to be such a lament. Speaking of premature,

つきのうちに かつらのひとを おもふとや あめになみたの そひてふるらむ
tsuki no uchi ni katsura no hito o omou to ya ame ni namida no soide furamu
 moon-within katsura(tree)'s man+acc think-of!/: rain-in tears fall

*I think of you, my Man in the Moon with his katsura tree
 When it rains I feel your tears, falling with the rain for me.*

~~~~~  
*My Katsura boy, my man in the moon, I think of you –  
 When it rains, know that my tears are falling, too!*

..  
 Your translator thought this 10c waka by Lady Ise (fl. 930) was one more of her clever love poems until he learned she had a son with the Emperor and remained in good-standing with her Empress, but that son was sent away to stay to the West of Kyôto. The name of that place? *Katsura*. And, now, yet another *katsura* pun from c.1700. It is not about *love* but a *lover*.

秋の夜の月のかつらの長かもじ 女とも見えつ男なりひら 月洞軒  
 aki no yo no tsuki no katsura no naga-kamoji onna to mo mietsu otoko narihira getsudôken  
 autumn night's moon's katsura-tree/wig's long false-tress woman-as-evn appears man is/narihira

*Toupee or not toupee? That's a question for a Whig. But wearing a tress!*  
*I guess Mr. Moon is really Narihira! – What girlishness!*

The original is *great*. The tree identified with Katsurao, the man in the moon, is a *katsura*: so is a wig. Getsudôken affirms that with a redundant *naga-kamoji*, or “long false tress,” simultaneously corrupting it, for men may wear toupees but only women *wear tresses*, especially *long* ones. Did Narihira ever resort to costume? Who knows. But a 18c *senryû* does equate a sea-cucumber with the old-fashioned man (*mukashi otoko*) of the *Tales of Ise*, modeled on Narihira. With Japan at peace, the samurai class competed to be more macho than thou. A man whose *raison d' être* was skirt-chasing, who would do anything to conquer a woman's heart, was despised as *spineless*. The way the verb *nari* (is) puns into the name *Narihira* to clinch it is a classic Tenmei *kyôka* trick ninety years early!

俎板の面やせしたる恋の身を切り刻みても逢んとぞ思ふ 中道 同寄俎板恋  
 manaita no tsura yaseshitaru koi no mi o kiri kizumitemo awan to zo omou nakamichi  
 chopping-board-face thinned love/longing's body+acc. chopping-even meet-would+emph think

~ Love & Chopping Boards ~

*On my face as flat as a chopping board, I'd make mince  
 of my own love-sick body if it would only help us meet!*

Longing, or *koi* is homophonous with something that might be minced on a board, a *carp*. That fish lost in translation was replaced with meet=meat. We shall let this poem and the next stand for miscellaneous 18-19c *kyôka* love poems. Three or four score may be found in the 740-pp monster, but the following is not. It was just found in a dictionary of *kyôka*.

.. 恥しや筆持つ術もしら紙を丸めて人にぶつつけるとは 浅草干則 万代狂歌集  
 hazukashi ya fude motsu sube mo shira^kami o marumete hito ni buttsukeru to wa asakusa kansoku?  
 embarrassing!/: brush hold skill knows-not=blank-paper+acc rolling-up person-at throw/hit-as-for

無筆の恋といふを on illiterate love

*Taking the paper and crumpling it up into a ball to throw  
 at the beloved – why? She couldn't write if you must know!*

*Love abashed! Lacking skill with a brush must be  
 why she crumpled up the paper to throw it at me*

Kidding re. a lack of writing skills comes with high literacy. The pivot pun on *not knowing* => *white/blank* is good and the idea excellent: crumpled up paper was common enough in Japanese poetry but this is the first such that is blank – Has the medium ever so clearly been the message?

~~~~~  
 我思ふひと枝手折者ならば指をも切りてやり梅の花 天地玄黄 一万 c.1783?
waga omou hito eda ta-oru mono naraba yubi o mo kiriteyari ume-no-hana tenchi genkô
 my loving person branch hand-break one is-if, finger+acc even cutting give plum blossom

*If the one I love should break a blooming limb for me, his point
 known, I'll be his sugar plum and pledge my baby finger joint!*

Kyôka of the pleasure quarters are under-represented in translation because Yoshiwara was a world of its own and most poems on it must be presented as part of a longer treatment to entertain. This, captioned *Love via Plants* 寄植物恋, is introduced because most readers already know courtesans sometimes gave clients the last joint of their baby finger as pledges and some will know breaking off blooming branches was standard idiom for taking a spray for viewing back at home or presenting. If you catch the final pun: the *yari=giving* also sounds like *spear* which, together with plum, *ume*, is a variety of the same, and you already have it. Also, the poem is a good front act for the hard to classify masterpiece that follows:

東寺なる瓜実顔の君ならば指はさら也腕も切らはや 百子 momoko
tôji-naru urizanegao no kimi naraba yubi wa sara nari ude mo kirabaya c.1730
 eaast-temple-is-melonseed-face's lord/sweetheart is-if finger-as-for of-course arms too cut-would

Love & Melons

寄 瓜 恋

*Melon-seed face of Temple East, with solstice coming, something begs;
 Forget the fingers – in your case, I'd lop off my arms and legs!*

A *melon-seed face* was oval, beautiful for a woman. No solstice is mentioned, but the nickname for Kyôto's temple 教王護国寺 Kyôgokoku-ji, Tôji (East Temple) sounds like *winter solstice*; hence, *tôji-kabocha*, or *winter-solstice squash/pumpkin/melon*. On this date, we find *haikai* feting the roly-poly dharuma – the world starts to roll back up. The symbolic honing down to the spiritual core of winter and identification of beauty with roundness in the Sinosphere reach their hyperlogical conclusion. Chances are there were limbless wooden dolls (typical in Japan) on sale at said temple. The *kyôka* was in a section devoted to metaphors of *love* but might have been better in the winter section. The Pleasure Quarters is not mentioned, but removing body parts to prove one's love – once something only done at the funeral of the great – did come from there.

~~~~~

♪ *Love metaphor and water.* Two full (two-page) chapters – *Marine Metaphor Meets Land-locked Culture (ours)* – in the 740-page *Monster* treat the impossibility of translating sea-related metaphor and allegory, mostly with examples from the *Tales of Ise*, some poems of which were literally left half-blank by a leading translator! Readers with particular interest in the problems of translation might enjoy it, others might not. This was the final note of the chapter but I changed my mind.

..

あまのすむさとのしるべにあらなくに 怨みむとのみ人のいふらむ 小野小町  
 ama no sumu sato no shirube ni aranaku ni uramin to nomi hito no iuran ono no komachi kks727  
 fisher/sea-harvesters live hamlet's/s' guide-as am-not though begrudge[=bay-see] is only/all people say

~ a littoral complaint about complaints ~

*I am no guide to seafolk hamlets – so why such rancor,  
 When they ask and I do not show them to the shore?*

Who knows if Komachi was what Usanians call a *prick-teaser* or, like the English *Virgin Queen*, a hole short. Regardless, it hurts not to lose the fine yet simply expressed wit of someone called the Sappho of Japan. The wit depends upon the untranslatable 4-syllabet homophonic pun where *uramin* means both 浦見ん = *bay-see-would* [like to see the bay] and 怨みん = *begrudge-would*. She laments *that* is “all a *hito*=person/people/you/my love say about/tell” her. I feel “you” beats “him” and they also works, but such details matter little (my *they/them* might be changed to *you*) compared to the fact that her complaint of being fed up with the resentment of allegedly numerous yet never indulged suitors, is no longer expressed as a witty pun. I followed the others in changing the *bay* into the *shore*, because the male heart, like a mangrove pen (my metaphor) hopes to land upon and root into the female shore and, in English, the *ulterior/backside/wrong-side-of-the tracks* sense of the Japanese bay is missing, anyway (*Am I a guide to the seafolk hamlets! Why keep crying / that I'll pay for not showing you clam-bake bay?*). While Komachi's *waka* is among the *Kokinshû* love poems and not in the dedicated *haikai* chapter, with other “eccentric poems” (Cr), many of which have the *kyôka* feeling, *if* only I could mimic in English the way she turns a noun and verb (orthographically invisible, above) into another verb after the feisty denial which builds up the complex metaphor, you would see this is as good an example of mad poem *technique* as any by *kyôka* master Shokusanjin. // . . . ★ What follows is from the *Tales of Ise*. “Mc.” is McCullough.

いはまよりおふるみるめしつれなくはしほひしほみちかひもありなむ  
 iwama yori ouru mirume shi tsurenaku wa shiohi shiomichi kai mo arinamu  
 crags-‘tween firm cover sea=see=weed vainly-as4 ebdtide hightide value/shells evn are!?

*Out on the reef, who can say but seaweed may prove hard to get.  
 Still, tides rise and fall, a man might find some shellfish yet!*

I am unsure of Mc.'s reading “Who is to say? / If we continue / To see one another, / Something may come of it.” [+info. given in endnote], which I follow, but sure Harris is too negative: “To the murky weeds / growing in among the crags / nothing seems worthwhile: / Ebbing tides nor high tides full / bring no presents from the sea!”

★The above was a teasing woman leading a man on. And here is his response:

なみだにぞぬれつゝしほる世の人のつらき心はそでのしづくか  
*namida ni zo nuretsutsu shiboru yo no hito no tsuraki kokoro wa sode no shizuku ka*  
 tears-by soaking-while wring world's people's hurting hearts-as-for sleeves' drops?

*So are these tears from a suffering heart that soak my sleeves  
 Just so many drops of brine – Wring ‘em out and all is fine?*

Mc. finally jumps to life here, “*Wringing my tear-drenched sleeves, / I wonder if perhaps / Your icy heart / Has been transformed / Into those drops of moisture.*” H., as always [in an overly elaborate reading], “*So great are my tears / that no wringing drives them out: / Should the bitterness / that you brew within your heart / flow in drops from off my sleeve?*” Let me put in a word for *the sea*. *Namida*, tears, begins with a homophone of waves, *nami*, creating a link to the earlier chain of associations. Hence my *brine*. The original may deserve a more aphoristic reading: *So would the pangs of love that humans feel be but this – / drops of brine, wrung from sleeves soaked by our tears?* – & translation, what is it?

★ I got a bit off-track here, for the association of tears and brine may be found in English, too. I had a hidden agenda, which was to show that, with a little effort, poetry could be translated so as to *add* wit to, rather than subtract it from a tale. The metaphor in the following *Kokinshû waka* by Okikaze translates better than most.

あふまでのかたみとてこそとどめけめ 涙に浮ぶもくづなりけり おきかぜ  
*au made no katami tote koso todomekeme namida ni ukabu mokuzu narikeri okikaze*  
 meet-until's namesake for kept, tears in floating seaweed/algae became! kks #745

Dallying with a closely guarded daughter, someone came out to say her parents were calling. She rushed inside leaving behind the overskirt she had taken off. Returning it,

*this souvenir left  
 behind “till we meet again”  
 it seems this trailing  
 skirt has become a rope of  
 seaweed in a sea of tears*

*The silky train  
 you left behind – ‘Until  
 we meet again,’  
 Became an algal trail,  
 floating on a sea of tears.*

The translation on the left (in my centering.) is by Rodd and Henkenius from whom I borrowed the term “overskirt” for the ornate and bulky train that we can well imagine a woman taking off to be at ease. The “*rope* of seaweed” is brilliant. I have eaten *mo*, which is sold soaking in light rice-vinegar. It does seem to link in a somewhat rope-like manner. I use *algal*, for *mo* doesn't make me think of the “duck” in the dictionary's first offering, and *trail* fits the idea of a train well. If you wish to make it a *duckweed* trail, instead, please change “afloat” to *bobbing* and it will add some humor to the metaphor. Regardless, we see here both an outlandish *kyôka*-class *tear+memento* hyperbole and marine metaphor utterly exotic to English, despite its father or motherland being an island. Seriously, I never cease to be amazed with the degree to which Japanese poetry, even while the capital of culture was in Nara and Kyôto, both inland cities, kept the sea. While the desert religions of North Africa and continental influence largely removed the same from the English consciousness, neither jungle-born Buddhism nor Chinese literature did anything similar to the Japanese. In English literature, the sea is all about foreign lands. It is an outside rather than internal or domestic presence. ★ Or, did I exaggerate?

## Mad Sex, mostly by Getsudôken the poet who loved it

死にますといふて夜すがらだひてねて 今朝のわかれはよみぢがへりか 月洞軒  
shinimasu to iute yosugara daite-nete kesa no wakare wa yomijigaeri ka getsudôken  
別 “(i) die” saying, all-night hug-sleeping this-morning’s separation-as-for yellow-spring-return?

*A night spent in embrace ‘dying! dying!’ At dawn, instead  
of just a parting, we return from the Land of the Dead!*

Getsudôken may be the best 31-*mora* poet of sex Japan has or will ever have, for he lived in a peaceful age before the upper classes were tamed by centuries of Tokugawa rule and before sex was sorted out into stereotypes by *senryû* and analyzed to death by science. 14 and 17-*mora* comic poetry of the mid-18c would play with *la petit mort* – children worried because mom cried it at night, monks in a married sect found it propitious as they depended on funeral services for income, etc. – but this poem with a personal touch is something else again. Contradicting the always sad partings of *waka* with a testimonial of the joyful parting of spent lovers through a mythology-based hyperbole! The *kyôka*, virtually unknown, should be as famous as any by Tenmei era *kyôka*-master Shokusanjin!

みそぎしてそこできのふの夜もすがら いもと色しる今朝の初秋  
misogi shite soko de kinô no yo mo sugara imo to iro shiru kesa no hatsuaki  
purifctn(in a rivr) doing there-by ystrdy night-thru lovr-w/ color/sex knowng fall mornng

*I went down to the river. Yes, I did my ablutions rite;  
On the first day of Autumn, after we fucked all night!*

These all-night marathons are not the most erotic of Getsudôken’s poems; but the above may be the most *outrageous* because abstention on the eve of a purification ritual was proper. Still, if you think things through logically – precisely what good mad poets do – the opposite preparation makes as much sense as the accepted one. Saussure, after Wittgenstein, noted how it would have been equally fitting had students of a famous composer burned his papers as divvy up and take them home. He was wrong to think that proved significance was arbitrary. Doing the usual, crawling rather than walking to the river, maintaining silence etc. would do nothing for *this* rite. But not getting down and dirty at all or doing it up big would, logically speaking, both be metaphysically appropriate actions.

節分廿一日 まく豆を祝ひおさめて其後に きこしめさるゝよるのまめ哉  
maku mame o iwai osamete sono nochi ni kikoshimesaruru yoru no mame kana c1700  
scattering beans+acc celebration-finishing that-afterward eat night’s bean/s is/are!/?

*The beans thrown, then, let us not forget to finish this rite!  
I’m partaking in some beans myself with the wife tonight.*

Somewhere in Italy they used to strike pots and pans and so forth while shouting “*Out with the bad and in with the good!*” as the Old Year was replaced by the New. In some parts, they threw lentils about, as they resemble coins in shape. The Japanese bean-throwing that Getsudôken so enjoyed – he has many poems related to the rite – shares elements of both. We have a problem, however, with the terminology. This rite, or ceremony, if you dislike that word, is often called an “exorcism,” but that only covers the bad half, beans tossed *out* – or at papa dressed up as a demon, etc. (Seeing the gleeful expression of the children beaning their papas, makes me think this practice should be universally adopted!) – and completely neglects the good half, beans tossed inward and generally eaten to be literally incorporated. As beans, *mame*, were synonymous with the female sex (or just clitoris, depending on context), the unabashed sex-loving poet found a way to make a plain, rather childish ceremony the prelude to an erotic finale. If I am not mistaken, on that night every year, Getsudôken probably made a point of eating his wife. Perhaps he had a few drinks first, for I am afraid he *also* wrote this:

鬼今宵鼻をふさぎてにげにけり まかでもいもがまめのくさに 黒田月洞軒  
*oni koyoi hana o fusagite nigenikeri maka de mo imo ga mame no kusasa ni* 大団 c1700  
 demon/s this eve nose+acc stoppng-up fled+final. scatter-not evn sis/girl's bean/s' stnk-frm

除 New Year's Eve 夜

*See the demon  
 pinch his nose, blink  
 & quickly flee.*

*Her beans still in hand,  
 must really pack a stink!*

*See the devil  
 pinch his nose, turn tail  
 and run like hell.*

*Yet untossed, her beans:  
 It must be from the smell!*

Judging from his other poems, this does not reflect misogyny; Getsudôken was just being his bawdy self. Stinky food, itself, was an exorcist and he simply could not help punning on those beans. Besides, he could be even more outrageous, as when he either wrote a pop-song (はやり小うた) or made one into a *kyôka* to roast a monk who died of dry-kidney – a wasting disease caused by too much sex (see *Octopussy, Dry-Kidney & Blue Spots* for a chapter on it) – for his *tsuizen*, or memorial, on, of all times, the (death) anniversary of Saint Nichiren (*omeiko ni bobo shita bachi ya atariken tsui ni jinkyô de shinare maratta*). Why? That day is called *omeiko/ô* = 御命講, homophonous with “honorable cunt.” As a tolerant Rabelaisian, he doubtless disliked the sect, as it was infamous for vituperative attacks on other sects. But, again, the pun made him do it!



うら若みねよげに見ゆる若草をひとのむすばむことをしぞ思ふ ise #49  
*urawaka mi neyoge ni miyuru wakakusa o hito no musubamu koto oshizo omou*  
 pretty young body sleep/sex-good-as looking yungrass+acc other binds thing regretful think  
 はつくさの などめづらしき ことのはぞ うらなくものを おもひけるかな  
*hatsukusa no nado mezurashiki kotonoha zo uranaku mono o omoikeru kana* 伊勢 #49  
 first-grass's etc. rare/sexy wordleaves+emph. backless/heartless things+acc think-have-been!/?

Once, a man, seeing that his sister had grown very attractive, said,

*Sweet & tender lass, you look like you'll be good in bed  
 – It hurts to think another will tie Young-grass, instead!*

to which she replied,

*Why not 'first-grass!' That, too, is old, even for a platitude!  
 If words are leaves, leave me be, brother rude in attitude!*

This is *not* from a book of *kyōka* but *The Tales of Ise* (c.900), next to the *Hundred Poets One Poem*, once, the most commonly read literary work. My translation is a bit too comic for the original, the most or, perhaps *only* infamous poem in said *Tales*. Imperial Japanese, like the Egyptians, had a tradition of sibling spouses but, by this time, it was obsolete. What follows is the same poem from an early-17c *kyōka* parody of *Ise* called *Nise-monogatari*, phonetically speaking, “Fake Tales” published about the time Getsudōken was born. It substitutes one distasteful content for another:

つらあかみくさげに見ゆる若草を人の笑はんことをしぞ思ふ nise #49  
*tsura akami kusage ni miyuru wakakusa o hito no warawan koto oshizo omou*  
 face red smelly-as seen younggrass-at people laugh-would thing regretfully+emph think  
 はづかしやなどあてことの言の葉ぞ面目くなくもおもひけるかな 仁勢  
*hazukashi ya nado atekoto no kotonoha zo menboku naku mo omoikeru kana*  
 embarrassing how! etc/sayingsuch insinuating words shameless even think! #49

Odd man, seeing his sister had a very red face, said

*Beet red face, alas, it means that you'll be stinky there –  
 It hurts to think some grin about it: Young-grass, I care!*

to which she replied,

*How embarrassing to have to hear such rude insinuation –  
 If words are leaves, it's fall: you should be the blushing one!*

This cultural meme far from extinct. The translator heard the same about red faces in 1990's Japan. Doctors take note! Or, do they already *do* spot yeast unbalances that way? Not that the author of *Fake Ise*, or *Nise* tales, arbitrarily chose that phenomenon. It chose him. The homophony of “stink” (*kusasa/kusai*) and “grass” (*kusa*), made Issa describe his own

grass hut (pg. 159-60) as fart-filled. While unimportant for the larger plot, the climax of which we will reach by and by, let me note that the phrase *ura naku* in the sister's reply is problematic. The above reading follows a gloss by Fuji Masaharu 富士正晴 (初草なんて陳腐なことって、露骨なことをまあ), but Japanese or not, he was no specialist like McCullough, who translated, "*Why do you speak of me / in words novel as the first / grasses of spring? / Have I not always loved you / quite without reserve?* (Tales of Ise) Before we proceed to the poem that should be the recognized exemplar of a sex-as-parody *kyôka*, we need to see one more *Tale of Ise waka*.

むさし(かすが)のはけふはなやきそわかくさのつまもこもれり我もこもれり 伊勢#12  
*musashi/kasuga-no wa kyô wa na yakiso wakakusa no tsuma mo komoreri ware mo komoreri* ise  
 musashi/kasuga moor-as-4 today-as-4 burn-not young-grass-spouse hidden I too hidden +古今#17

*Not, today! Burn not Musashi moor! Soft spring grass  
 Lies hidden there, no less, my sweet young blade & I.*

~~~~~  
*Not, today! Burn not the moor of Kasuga, for here we lie
 My sweetheart as tender as the new spring grass, and I!*

"The" original comes in two versions. The *Tales of Ise* (c.905) puts the story in the mouth of a girl begging them not to burn a field to flush her kidnapper (a 'thief of peoples' daughters,' i.e., they absconded without her parents' permission). The *Kokinshû* (905) version is not prefaced. *Young-grass* eventually came to modify maidens alone, but at this time a *young blade* was a possible reading. This poem bore many take-offs of which my favorite represents what we might call the instinct most beloved by the *kyôka* poet (hint: it is *not* sex). That poem may be found in the chapter on Mad Spring. And, now, we are ready for the climax, a *kyôka* using mostly the words of this *Tale of Ise waka* to put the horny sister-lover and prurient ancients who come up with such ideas in the other *Tales of Ise waka* in their place far better than his sister's retort (in any reading) could:

春日野や妻もこもれるわか草になきて 根よけに見ゆる小男しか 米成
kasugano ya tsuma mo komoreru wakakusa ni nakite neyoge ni miyuru saojika yonenari
 kasugano: mate+emph. hiding younggrass-in/frm crying sleep/sex-good-for looks yearling

*Ho, Kasuga Moor! Hiding in the new grass, with his doe
 A young buck – to hear him bleat, he'll be a good ____!*

English readers are welcome to replace the *buck* with a *stag* and the *f*____ for a *sh*____. Found on a Seven Treasures Club 七宝連 sponsored New Year *surimono* (print) with another *kyôka* and a picture of a mother deer and yearling, this droll pastiche or bleating irony – how *does* one take it? – dating to the late-1820s, is one of the few take-offs in *kyôka* that is a

genuine parody, allusions with an attitude if you will. One small point. *Neyoge*, or *apparently-good-to-sleep-with* (in Usanian slang, *looks like a good lay*) is written with the character 根 *root* and originally meant someone of good character, *good to the bone*, so to speak, but *root* being homophonic with *sleep* (both *ne*) . . . Usually applied to a female, here, applied to a male, an additional meaning of *root* comes to mind. Regardless, said *root* helps carry the poem from the *grass* 草 in the first part to the sexual innuendo in the second by association. Why is it a New Year's poem? Partly because it simply piggybacked on to another poem taking the spots on a fawn as the stars left in the sky from the previous year at dawn, partly because young-grass is a sign of spring and spring is synonymous with the New Year, and partly for a functional reason: it would surely trigger the first-laugh of the year in anyone who read it!

人の恋季はいつなりと猫とはゞ面目もなし何とこたへん 也有 万代狂歌集
hito no koi ki wa itsu nari to neko towaba menmoku mo nashi nan to kotaen yokoi yayû
 people's loves season-as-for when becomes =quote asks-if/when face-not+emph what reply-should?

*Ah, the shame!
 How can one reply when
 the cat has reason*

*to ask if the loves of men,
 like felines, has a season?*

*Asked by pussy
 "What season, then, do men
 come into heat?"*

*The cat's got my tongue:
 We must admit defeat!*

This less clever but equally telling commentary about human sexuality is a *kyôka* by gentleman *haikai* poet and *haibun* essayist Yayû (1657-1743). The poem would be more interesting were it written recently rather than several hundred years ago, as the oddity of the aseasonal nature of human sexuality as opposed to the seasonal or otherwise bounded instinct of other animals is now a commonplace. Yayû was also playing on a long *haikai* and *kyôka* tradition of playing with the mating behavior of cats.

猫の妻もし恋ひ死なば三味線の可愛やそれも色にひかれて 後西上皇 1635-85
neko mo tsuma moshi koi-shinaba shamisen no kawaii ya sore mo iro ni hikarete emp. gosai
 cat's/s' mate/s if love-die-when shamisen's charming!/?/: that to color/sex-for scratch/played/ing

*Plaintive, indeed, shamisen made from cats that die in season.
 Clawed then, plucked now, and for the same damn reason*

~~~~~  
*Piquant the song of shamisen born of cats that died for love;  
 No fur flies but sure enough, they're about getting some!*

The final verb in this masterpiece by the 111<sup>th</sup> Emperor Gosai, *hikarete*, a heterographic homophone means 1) scratched, 2) plucked and 3) drawn by love. English cannot do that in one word, so even if the cultural background

was given – cat skin was used to make the sound membrane of the banjo-like instrument and the entertainers who played them were called cats in Kyôto – the loss in translation was extreme.

♪ Life After Death in the Pleasure Quarters ♪

*Ah, mating cats, though you should die of love, as shamisen,  
You would be more charming yet still scratching for a screw!*

One wonders if the Emperor was playing not just with cats and courtesans but with a poem by *kyôka* master, Mitoku 未得 (1588-1669):

糸つけて手かひの猫はしやみせんのかはにかけても人にひかるゝ  
*ito tsukete tegai no neko wa shamisen no kawa ni kakete mo hito ni hikaruru*  
 string put-on pet cat-as-for shami's skin-as put/spread+emph people-by pluck/scratched

*Just string him up and stretch your pet into a banjo skin;  
He scratched you, so now, you might as well scratch him!*

Again that damn verb does not do it in English. Please pretend “scratch” *also* means play a string instrument as it does in Japanese. Note also that the same verb also could refer to being *pulled about* on a leash or *loved*!

~~~~~  
 うつものもうたるゝものも奥女中 かはらけならぬ 毛沢山なり 蜀山家集
utsumono mo utaruru mono mo okujochû kawarake naranu ketakusan nari shokusanjin
 striking one/thing struck one/thing even palace maid bare-pot is-not hair much is 18-19c

草履うちの画に

On a Picture of Straw Sandal Beating

*The thumper and the thumped, both are palace maids;
Far from bare pies, these are hairy as the Everglades!*

A well-known 20c Japanese party song has twelve stanzas, one for each month, each *seemingly* but not *actually* dirty. One example, the master chases around the maid. Hanky-panky on the mind? No, he just wants her to do the end-of-the-year cleaning . . . The above is both a prime example of such fake sex and the great *kyôka*-master's most outrageous take-off. It is a bit complex for this book, but too good not to at least try. Sex first. *Senryû*, following *haikai*, made a big deal of the quasi-harem existence of palace maids who strapped on dildos to assuage their loneliness and unlike women in the pleasure quarters did not shave their pubes – forgive my *Everglades*, a river of grass not *hair* – and did not shy away from pre-

pube(scent) girls who were called unglazed pots and not bare pies. Tenmei mad poems, coming right on the tail of the *senryû* boom, generally did not *really* treat such matters, but they did *pretend to*. Shokusanjin assembles a menagerie of erotic stereotypes here for a poem someone who did not see the picture or caption might take for a pornographic epigram ala Martial rather than a close-up of macramé sandal-making down to the tiny “hairs” sticking from the pounded straw twine used to make them. Now, for the second complexity and what really makes this outrageous. Shokusanjin was *also* playing with an early-16c poem about as far from erotic as anything ever written, unless you, like Emily Dickinson, get off on death:

うつものもうたるるものも土器の われての後はもとの塊 道寸 銀葉夷歌集
utsu mono mo utaruru mono mo kwarake no warete no ato wa moto no katamari
 striking ones/things & struck ones/things earthen-ware broken-after original lump

*Those striking and those struck, both unglazed pots today;
 Once broken, all rejoin the original lump of clay.*

A description of a pile for malformed work at a pottery? No. This is *a genuine death-poem* written by Michitake in 1516, before a battle that resulted in the extinction of the Miura clan (相模の守護、三浦道寸は1516年に北条早雲の攻撃を受けて家臣百余名とともに討ち死に) when a hundred-plus Miura vassals, headed for certain death, drank *sake* together from the unglazed earthenware cups (contrary to Europeans who used vessels made of precious metals and adorned with jewels for the same – see *Topsy-turvy 1585* for the reasons). In case you miss the connection between the poems, please note the verb “*thump*” in the first, then “*strike*,” is the same *utsu*, and both “bare pies” (a semi-Japanese modernism from *pai-man*, or hairless vulva) and “unglazed pots” in Shokusanjin’s poem are the same *kwarake*. The “far from bare pies” (*kwarake naranu*) means, “~ *contrary to the mention of unglazed/bare vessels/ pies with respect to beating/throwing (utsu/utare) in the previous poem*. It would seem the *kyôka* facetiously contradicts the death poem for the hell of it. And, please note where I found the death poem: a 1679 *kyôka* anthology.

しばらくも 夜床に尻をすえざるは わが妻ならぬいな妻ぞかし 朱楽かん江
shibaraku mo yotoko ni shiri o suezaru wa waga tsuma naranu inazuma zokashi akera kankô 1785
 awhile+emph nightbed-in butt+acc set-not-as-for my wife/lover-becomes-not lightning/no-wife 徳和

(No wonder I thunder!)

*Ne'er in my bed long enuf to sleep, the girl called Lightning;
 Here I am for a screw, and all she does is bolt!*

The original, unEnglishable though relying on only one double-pun, describes a popular woman in the pleasure quarter shuttling between rooms with two or more customers not as a *tsuma*, or *mate/wife*, but *ina-zuma*, meaning *lightning* and usually written 稲妻 the first character, meaning “rice” and second “wife,” but, here, with the former written phonetically *ina* can mean *not/none* and the lightning becomes “*non(or not-in)-mate/lover*.” There are many prefaces of negation in Japanese, but *ina* is particularly fitting here because the woman dis/appearing evokes the nursery game of peek-a-boo, “*Ina ina booh!*” in Japanese! Extended metaphors such as *She is no mate / of mine who fast as lightning / bolts my bed // Leaving me and my thunder / without even a rain date*, slang obfuscation: *To a Popular Harlot // Do your duty / move your booty but don’t go / room to room // I’m talking, it’s good to be hot! / But, don’t go walking, it’s not!* wordplay closer to the original: *Quick as a bolt / from the blue – she’ll do me / She’ll do you // Eighty percent of lover / is over: we are through!* all bore. To match the poet, one must forget details:

*Will, my Beau, my gigolo, why must you so quickly go?
Slow down, give me a Kiss! I’ll not pay Will o’ the Wisp!*

No, even a clever *a.k.a.* is not as good as a perfect pun. The translator was ready to ditch the damn poem when that *bolt*, doubling as noun+verb, came from the blue and gave him a flawed, but, coupled with that *screw*, finally *fun* translation. The reader might wonder how one could waste so much time translating one poem. First, complete concentration is the only peace someone with tinnitus gets. Second, because Akera Kankô’s puns are the most effective in all *kyôka* (See his year’s end poem, p.196) and translation is a good way of discovering what makes them so. Is it not relaxing the reader’s guard with a combination of easy language and familiar stereotypes and only then finishing him or her off with a knock-out pun as slick and unexpected as an upper-cut to the chin?

いぎりすも ふらんすも皆 里なまり度々来るはいやでありんす 筒井鑾溪
igirisu mo furansu mo mina sato namari tabitabi kuru wa iya de arinsu tsutsui 1788-1859
 english & french & all (their)country’s dialect sometimes coming-as-4=brothel yucky is+ rankei

Displeasure in the Pleasure Quarters

*The Igrisu and the Furansu all have accents they’d share
 What nerve to dare talk to us like that de arinsu!*

This is one of those poems that ensure translation *never* fully replaces learning the language yourself. The best pun, *come* ⇒ *brothel* (*kuru wa = kuruwa*) is superb and untouchable, while the whole point of the poem

depends on a specific verb, *arinsu*, a variation on the formal way to say “is/are,” *arimasu*, an argot unique to the women in the Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarters sounding like the names given to various foreign nationals. The poem, made by the old man who served as administrator of Nagasaki when Japan was opened by Perry in the mid-19c, pokes fun at the women, with their odd speech, supposedly upset to be visited by foreigners with *theirs*. Tsutsui Rankei’s poem is driven by the similarity between the end of the words *Furansu* (France/French) *Igirisu* (England/English) and the Courtesan’s *arinsu*. After all, he also dealt with the Dutch and Russians and *they* are not mentioned. Because Japanese had long studied Dutch, they had their work cut-out for them to learn the other European “dialects” – when you consider the difference between Indo-European and Ural-Altaic language, dialect is not far from the truth! The word used in the poem *sato-namari*, means *country/town /local pronunciation or accent*. It can include the nuances of dialect, too, but the focus here is on *sound*, hence *accent*. English lacks the right generic term for a popular sound-centered local lingo; our good words are specific to *particular* dialects, eg. Scottish *brogue*, Southern *drawl* and Midwest *twang*. Ah, the *de* before the *arinsu*. It is a part of speech that is meaningless but comes before is/are proper or dialectal and, to those of us who speak Japanese, it would sound wrong to drop it, so it remains in the translation.

天の戸もしばしなあけそきぬ／＼のこのあかつきをとこやみにして 遊女はた巻
amanoto mo shibashi na ake so kinuginu no kono akatsuki o tokoyami ni shite yûjo hatamaki 1786
 heaven’s door too while not-open-not (lovers’)parting’s this dawn+acc. permanent-dark/bed-into make

*Must we part! Open not, not for a while, O Heaven’s Door!
 Let this dawn stay dark and us in bed for evermore!*

This poem, where *permanent-darkness=tokoyami* allusively associates with *bed=toko*, accompanied a picture of Yûjo, or Courtesan, Hatamaki, one of 50 Tenmei era *kyôka* poets, including three *yûjo*, in the *Azuma Song Kyôka Pocketbook* 吾妻曲狂歌文庫. Hamada’s notes say she was real and worked in 大文字屋 The Big Letter, a house owned by a *kyôka* enthusiast, and Yomo no Akara, himself, signed a poem for her, suggesting they met, yet the poem seems a bit too fitting to be true and may be a *ringer*. Here, for comparison, are two *waka* by 10c lady’s man Sanekata.

妹と寝ば岩戸の空もさし曇りその夜ばかりはあけずもあらむ 実方 958-98
imo to neba iwato no sora mo sashikumori sono yo bakari wa akezu mo aramu sanekata
 sis/lover-w/ sleep-whn cave-door’s sky cloudover tht-nght extnt open=tire-not would-not!

*Sleeping with Sis, I’ve come to wish Heaven’s doors would stay shut,
 With the sky too dark for day to break, tonight, I cannot get enough!*

Sashi, or “barred” becomes *sashikumori*, or “clouding over,” a term used in a Hitomaro poem on staying someone, *and* puns with a term found in the *Record of Ancient Matters* (Kojiki 712), *sashikomori*, meaning *to hole-up* somewhere and *akezu*=*not dawning*= not opening. This has more puns than the Tenmei era *yûjo*, or ringer’s poem, but loses to the charm of the word *tokoyami* in the *kyôka*. But what about the next?

天の戸を我ためにとは鎖さねども あやしくあかぬ心地のみして 実方 10c
 ama no to o waga tame ni to wa sasanedomo ayashiku akanu kokochi nomi shite sanekata
 heaven’s door+acc my sake-for-as4, barred-not but oddly cloyed(=open)-not feeling only have!

*Heaven’s Portal
 was for my sake left ajar;
 But odd to say,
 I’m still far from through
 longing for you come day.*

The poem had a preface: “When I was openly with the same lady in the northern hall, towards dawn we opened the shutters as the sky looked particularly fine; so, too, did my lady” (McAuley et al* Sheffield Univ. waka site). The poet writes that though the portal was left unbarred – an allusion to her privates as well – it did not open, *akanu* あ=開=かぬ, or so one imagines for a split second before the words which follow show that *akanu* means あ=飽=かぬ, the active verb for *insatiate*, i.e., he cannot get enough of her. This complex ploy makes the old *waka* more of a *kyôka* than even the *yûjo*’s (courtesan’s) Tenmei *kyôka*. Only Getsudôken’s lovers returning from the land of the dead with which we began the chapter is clearly more novel than Sanekata’s confession, though it is not so perfectly comic as Akera Kankô’s last-word pun on *inazuma*, the popular “lightning=not-present-mate” in the Pleasure Quarters.

われもせじ留守の間をたしなめと言ひて別れし妻ぞ恋しき 貞徳
 ware mo seji rusu no aida o tashiname to iite wakareshi tsuma zo koishiki teitoku
 i too do-not absence’s while temperate-be! so saying parted wife+emph. dear

*Swearing that while you’re out “I, too, won’t do it,” we find
 Day by day she grows more dear – the wife you left behind.*

~~~~~  
*Saying “I, too, shall refrain” we promised to be chaste;  
 So on the road, I found my wife beloved to my taste.*

This poem is among Teitoku’s *Hundred Kyôka* and included in the Tenmei era *Manzai Kyôka* anthology, but a man remaining chaste and growing horny through abstention is barely mad. Still, it seems a mad way

to end a chapter on sex, which some readers may find wanting. With respect to the pleasure quarters, which feature large in the Occident's image of old Japan, the fact is that most of the women were first and foremost entertainers and most of the clients were not the poor bachelors who bought sex elsewhere but married men of means or literatae with patrons of means who used the establishments as *places to hold parties and seek romance*. You will find more on them in the chapter on *love*. Speaking more broadly, this presentation is tame because: 1) the translator has yet to read the sex-centered parodies with *kyôka* that do exist and is saving the subject for later *if* he finds them interesting; 2) bawdy ballads and, later, *senryû* had so much detailed obscenity that *kyôka* collections had no call to focus on the subject. If you would know more, see my book of dirty *senryû*. \* 3) As such poetry is not central to enjoying *kyôka* but pursued too far could turn off some readers, little has been presented here.

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♪ The sister's reply to the what-a-waste-she's such-a-good-lay poem by her brother is problematic. Did McCullough (*Tales of Ise*: 1968) peg it? Or? Specialists are invited to write glosses for another addition.

♪ Should a sample of dirty *senryû* be in this book? Say, the fan-maker as dildo supplier to the Isle of Women or an octopussy or two? Readers of both books, let me know. Feedback matters. I do not write for myself. Rudolfsky read his children's books to children before finishing them. I would do the same with adults.

♪ *14 and 17-mora poems*. This includes *zappai*, or mixed haikai-derived poetry, which includes *Mutamagawa*, a huge collection that precedes (mid-18c) and overlaps *senryû* and is partly 7-7. It is often called *senryû* though sticklers insist *senryû* began with Karai Senryû whose name stuck with the genre he solidified.

♪ *Neyoge* or the *good-to-sleep-with buck*. This extraordinary *kyôka* was found in Daniel McKee's catalogue of *surimono*, color prints with one or more *kyôka*, *Colored in the Year's New Light* (2008). Over 90% of the *kyôka* translated prior to ♪ *Mad In Translation* (2009) are in museum catalogues of this literary artwork. That should tell us something about the nature of translation from Japanese into English!

♪ *Martial's Epigrams*. If you think limericks or hip-hop can be dirty, and are brave enough to see the all-too-colorful classic world before the paint washed off those sculptures . . .

♪ *McAuley and Sanekata*. I recall reading a *senryû* about a poet with a c\_\_t (*sane*) in his name over a decade ago, but did not know who he was. I only found Sanekata because he was one of many *waka* poets on a website of *waka* poetry put up by Thomas McCauley and students at Sheffield University who did not find him as erotic as this translator does. The website translation of that portal of heaven poem (*imo to neba ....*) on the joys of a night of love-making where the poet could never get enough was: "The portal of Heaven, / For my sake was / Shut not, yet - / How

*strange - endlessly for it to open not / Is all of my longing...*” Reading it (and all too many other such, the likes of which I find in *most* books of translation from the original) evoked my usual response to things that should not be: *didactic doggerel*.

*Translation is funny: U need  
not always be on the money;  
but unless you are set on wit,  
all too often, U won't get it!*

It is understandable that translators, who on the whole represent those the Bible claims will inherit the earth, often settle for meaningless “direct” translation. To *get something*, which is to say get it *right*, often means *guessing* and one is more likely to be criticized for getting something *wrong* than for *not getting it*. So, the meek pragmatist just translates what seems to be on the page without daring to divine the reading between the lines, which is, in most cases, what the lines are there for! We hear a lot about *poetry* lost in translation, but what about *ideas*? Without them, why the hell do we *need* poetry when one amplified variable tension piano-wire or well-cut piece of bamboo can produce better aural stimulation than all the poems that have ever been read?

♪ *Dirty Senryû*. There is only one book on and of Edo period dirty *senryû* in English and it is sold under two titles (an experiment). *Octopussy, Dry Kidney & Blue Spots* is one, *The Woman Without a Hole*, the other. Both are published by Paraverse Press and the content 100% viewable at Google.

♪ *Dry Kidney Disease* When I noted *haikai* roots of the concept of Dry Kidney disease mentioned in this chapter in the 740-page *Monster*. I had not yet realized that it was already being not only put into *kyôka* but spoofed as early as the 1650's or 60's until I found the following in the Tôkaidô part of the huge Baedeker edited by various people over the course of the second half of the 17c.

吉原 (東海道名所記 浅井了意著 地誌所載狂歌抄 万治年間)

傾城にくるひすぐれは銀虚して はてはひじにの わつらひとなる  
*keisei ni kurui-sugureba ginkyô shite hate wa hijini no wazurai to naru*  
 (pretty)harlot-with crazed/loving-exceed silver-empty-doing end-as-for  
 drought-death's disaster/hardship-as becomes

#### Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarters

*Go crazy for a courtesan and you'll loose your silver;  
In the end, your purse will be empty as a dry river!*

~~~~~  
In the end, you will have no arrows in your quiver.

The original, probably by Ryôei, changes *jinkyô*, or “kidney-empty” into *ginkyô* “silver-empty.” In Japan even today banks are called *ginkô* with the *gin* meaning “silver” not “gold.” In other words, not just gold but silver was synonymous with money. It is rare today for a Japanese pun to be a rhyme rather than a homophone. Such a pun is, itself, mad.

Mad Reporting: *from Personal Scoop to Public Squib*

べんざいてんへまふでする道にててんかんやみあわをふきけるをみてよみける
benzaiten e môde-suru michi nite tenkanyami awa o fukikeru o mite yomikeru

まふでする道にてあわをふくの神これそまことのべんざいてんかん
môde suru michi nite awa o fuku no kami kore zo makoto no benzaitenkan
pilgrimage-doing-road-on, foam+acc. spew ⇒ fortune/wealth-god/dess
this+emph. true benzaiten(goddess of wealth)⇒epilepsy (& exhibit?)

Read after meeting up with an epileptic, foaming
by the road on a pilgrimage to Benzaiten's shrine

♪ The power of *kyôka*, or how a *Grand Mal* becomes a *Petit Bon*! ♪

*On the road to the shrine of the Goddess of Wealth, a sign of plenty:
Foam that overflows a mouth – a charm we have . . . in epilepsy!*

Bokuyô's report morphs *fuku*=*spewing*, a verb, into its homophone *wealth* and links that to the Goddess whose name, Benzaiten, partially overlaps the disease, *tenkan*, or *epilepsy*. While the translated snapper is where it belongs (at the end of the poem), a partial rhyme does not match a truly telling pun. *Some* of this loss in translation is recovered with a clever title, reflecting my respect for what this physician (1607-78), who knew epilepsy was not a jinx or otherwise bad, and may have helped the sufferer, accomplished. Still, there is no substitute for the magic of marriage by pun of the Goddess of Prosperity, beauty and the literary arts to a disease and a symptom that makes others as well as the sufferer uneasy. There is a fine example of private reporting, which takes the otherwise un-newsworthy and makes it not only news but good news.

釈迦さまにみくしは落てねはん像 是そまことの地震成物 ト養 同
shaka-sama ni migushi wa ochite nehanzô kore zo makoto no jishin-seibutsu bokuyô
shakya-master-to reverend-head-as-for falling dead/recumbent/enlightened(buddha)statue
this+emph. true earthquake(=self? self-belief?)becoming-buddha/buddhification

大地震に上野の大仏みくし落ければ
On the rev. Head of Ueno's Colossal Buddha falling in the Great Earthquake

♪ *Finding the Godhead* ♪

*Shakya lost his reverend crown, it lies enlightened on the ground;
Why not celebrate this case of self-awakening in a quake!*

Humdrum, perhaps, when compared to finding significance in a seizure – or reporting the head of an “idol” that tumbled into a privy cesspool as reported with inordinate tongue out of cheek glee by Luis Frois S.J. (*Topsy Turvy* 1585) a century earlier, but who cannot love a poet that even finds the cheerful in a catastrophe? The Nehanzô in the original is the just dead-

Shakyamuni, in translation to Nirvana, something celebrated on Nehan day. An enlightened death, or final awakening, is called *becoming-buddha*, but here we have Buddha becoming himself. What a mad synecdoche: a recumbent Buddha found in a head on the ground! Poems like this and the previous one helped get Bokuyô the reputation of being “too light” to be worthy of passing down to generations of Japanese, but a wit-seeking critic might argue *that* is precisely why he deserves more attention.

金玉のさだまりかねて火事以後は ちうにぶらつくまらのかりやぞ 月洞軒
kintama no sadamari kanete kaji igo wa chû ni buratsuku mara no kariya zo getsudôken
 balls' settling cannot housefire since-as-for space-in dangling cock's glans/tempor.house! c.1700

*Since the Fire, our poor balls, unsettled, never go to bed,
 which leaves no pillow for Dick to lay his tired head.*

This mini-ballad – gonzo journalism or broadside? – *kyôka* about the aftermath of a fire, by the feisty top *kyôka*-master the generation after Bokuyô, adds the central member to the old saw of balls as tests of anxiety/tranquility of the confidence of leaders before battle or barometers of peace under Tokugawa rule (See *The Woman Without a Hole* for more). The added rhyme for head and invented “pillow” do not make up for the loss of the pun on *kari*, the glans penis that puns into the *kariya*, or rented dwelling, hanging precariously out in space over the nervous retracted balls to allegorize the circumstances of the newly homeless victims. Seldom has there been a poem so ugly yet interesting. Besides showing why Getsudôken ought to be better known, this reading is a good example of how wit may be kept though details change. It only works because English has a Proper Name for the penis that also stands for everyman (Tom, Dick and Harry). Yes, it is odd to have an English name for a Japanese *mara*. But, unless you can come up with something better . . .

見渡せばやなみすらりともかけて都は春の乞食なりけり 鸚鵡籠中記
miwataseba ya-nami surari to komo kakete miyako wa haru no kojiki narikeri 1707
 see-span-when shop/house wavs/rows lined mats-placd capitl-as4 sprng-bggr/s beca/ome!

*I looked around the capital and what sight did my eyes greet?
 Rows of shops covered w/ mats like beggars by spring streets!*

~~~~~  
*Now the shop roofs wear straw mats and each one looks the same  
 Our capital greets the Spring, a beggar in all but name!*

A fire destroyed much of Kyôto on New Year's Eve 1706. Asahi Bunzaemon's *Parrot Cage Report* gives us 58 poems about it. This one reminds me of South Miami after hurricane Andrew, though straw mats would look a hell of a lot better than blue plastic tarps (let us hope rain took a

holiday)! In Japanese, both translations easily coexist in a single poem. My other favorite is of a completely different sort:

日本のあるじ成べきしるしには 先大焼をしろしめすかな 同  
*hi no moto no aruji narubeki shirushi ni wa mazu ôyake o shiroshimesu kana 1707*  
 sun(=fire)'s origin's owner/lord is confirmation-as-for first big-burn+acc show-off!/?

*Lords of the Land of the Rising Sun, or are they the Spark of the Earth,  
 that they must first their mettle prove by burning down so much of it?*

“Hi-no-moto” and “Nippon” both mean *Source* or *Origin of the Sun* but only the former pronunciation includes the homophone *sun=hi=fire*. That, the first thing lost in translation, necessitated “spark of the earth.” If the previous like-a-beggar poem pictures reality with anthropomorphic metaphor, this one, *at least in the “they” reading* (“we” in the 740-page monster), becomes a classic squib, or could be, were it well-known. Other poems rudely treating the *kuge*, nobles belonging to the extended Imperial family who claimed descent from the ancient Sun Gods suggest “they” is “them.” One in *Parrot Cage* warns folk to hide their *nabe* (stew-pots) when *kuge* pass by lest they be swived. So, if the fire started from their part of town . . . The prose in the *Parrot Cage*, which I lack (*Broadview* keeps only some short prefaces), might settle the matter. Then, only months after the fire, we learn that here and there, even in Bunzaemon’s own garden, “hair,” some thin as an old person’s and four or five inches long, most shorter and some thick as horse-hair was sprouting up!

公家はやけ武家は腰ぬけ町はこけ 土にはゆるはもつけ也けり  
*kuge wa yake buke wa koshinuke machi wa koge tsuchi ni hayuru wa motsuke narikeri*  
 nobles-as4 roasting, warriors-as4 cowardly, town-as4 charred earth-in grow-as4 freaks are!

*Nobles roast, while boastful warriors flee: the town’s burnt toast  
 What is growing from the ground can only be a wrathful ghost!*

Since the phenomenon was reported in various parts of the nation, tying it into the fire seems odd, but Kyôto was still the heart of Japan even if its muscles and increasingly brain had moved to Edo. Another collection from this era in *Broadview*, 宝永落書 has a variation of the above with “fool firemen” (火消はたわけ) for “cowardly warriors” and a note on black, white and red hair growing from the ashes. Those colors suggest it was not just hysterical reaction to gossamer induced by man-made and natural catastrophes. The year ending in Kyôto’s inferno bathed Edoites in volcanic dust. *Senryû* would later joke about how the price of devil’s tongue (*konjaku*) rose that year, an allusion to the folk medicine claim that it is good to eat it in order to cleanse one’s bowels of sand!

上よりはすなをになれとふる砂に 我等こときは泥坊になる  
 ue yori wa sunao ni nare to furu suna ni warera gotoki wa dorobô ni naru  
 above-from-as4 "obedient/honest becom" as-if fallng sand-w/by my-likes-as4 thief bcom

*Dust falling from on high they tell us "mister drop your eyes!"  
 For people as low as me that means: 'Become mud-pies!*

~~~~~  
*Sand from on high says "be sunao!" truthful, admit defeat:
 In that case, me and my ilk must call ourselves deadbeat!*

~~~~~  
*Falling from high, sand says be yourself? Who'd have thunk  
 That a literal reading would make a 'thief' of this monk!*

The first translation is one of two possible misreadings of this *Parrot Cage* squib in the 740-page monster. The other made the poet a real thief rather than a nominal one as in the last reading. I assumed people "of my ilk" meant the lumpen, plain and simple, and the rise in food prices due to the volcanic dust caused a rise in crime. Re-reading, I *think* I got it. The second character in *dorobô* was shorthand for a monk. The first character of *dorobô*, a word I have always known only to mean a thief, is "mud." And, if the anonymous poet, possibly a monk, originally came from the same region Bunzaemon resided, *dorobô* meant a lazy good-for-nothing. The volcanic sand *suna* coming down from on high to signal the folk to be *sunao*, i.e., *honest, unpretentious, and docile* in the face of authority has been delightfully perverted. Here is another *suna/o* poem that was much easier to catch!

すなをなる御代のしるしに砂降て槍のふらぬかまたも仕合鸚鵡籠中記  
 sunao naru miyo no shirushi ni suna furite yari no furanu ga mada mo shiawase  
 obedient/honest/gentle becoms hon.reign's sign-as sand fallng spears fall-not still happy

*The sand fall, a sign of this docile age – who locks the door?  
 It beats a rain of spears, that's something to be thankful for!*

*Sunao*, a word with a unique combination of connotations with a positive message for moderns who give no respect to people who really deserve it because they were taught pride for the sake of pride, but misused by authoritarian leaders in Japan who demanded unquestioning obedience is interesting, but let us leave it behind for something new, the brave new world of the positive squib hinted at in my translation. It is not quite as clear in the original which does not go so far to boast "who locks the door?" In fact, the tone is more like, "it's better than a rain of spears, anyway" – alluding to war but an idiom as natural as "cats and dogs" – that is to say, it leaves room for cynicism, or . . . something. Now, let us jump forward almost a hundred years to another report on the times that is



not only the most famous *aren't-these-times-good!* *kyôka* ever written but the most famous *aren't-these-times-good!* poem of any sort in Japanese. It is by Ôta Nanpo (Shokusan/Yomo-no-akara), the most famous *kyôka* poet of all time.

かくばかりめでたくみゆる世の中を うらやましくやのぞく月影 萬載集, 蜀山百集  
*kaku bakari medetaku miyuru yo no naka o urayamashiku ya nozoku tsukikage shokusanjin 1783*  
 this much lucky/happy appears world/society+acc enviously+emph. peek?! moon-form/light

*a world that seems  
 so god-damn happy, why  
 the moon in the sky  
 must be peeking at us  
 out of sheer envy!*

*Peeking down  
 upon a world that looks  
 as happy as ours  
 Is that a trace of envy  
 I see on Luna's face?*

参考: かくばかり経がたく見ゆる世の中を 羨ましくもすめる月かな 拾遺 藤原高光  
 cf. *kaku bakari hegataku miyuru yo no naka o urayamashiku mo sumeru tsuki kana*  
 (this much cross-hard seems/ world+contra+lament. enviously-even clears/lives-can moon!)

Shokusanjin reverses the vector of envy found in a 10-11c *waka*: “Given this world that seems so hard to live in or pass through, / How envious a thing to see the moon clear and serene!” The original, above, shows how close they are. The *kyôka*’s transformation of the contradictory deplorative “o=を” of the *waka* into an accusative post-position and the lack of homophonic verbs for “live” and “[be] clear,” not to mention the tenuous link between *clarity* and *serenity* in English hurt the translations. The old *waka* is, *itself*, pretty wacky. Envy may be a compliment, but suffering poets usually found Buddha’s grace and solace in the serene face of the moon. Perhaps, the main difference between the poems is stylistic. What if I were to translate that *waka* as, say, “How can ye moon sit so high and pretty in a world where we all must get down and dirty to survive?” or,

*Just look at Luna  
 not a wrinkle in her brow;  
 While we suffer  
 indignities here below  
 that diva does not know!*

*How envious to see  
 the full moon sail through  
 this world of gloom;  
 While we must dog-paddle  
 not to sink within our tomb!*

Can such a mad translation make it a *kyôka*? I think so; but, is it the same poem? *Yes* and *no*. Now, let us take a closer look at Shokusanjin’s technique of reversal, then, reconsider its meaning *as conventionally interpreted*. In a word, my interpretation is different. With respect to the first, there is the following precedent among the *haikai* poems – often noted to be *proto-kyôka* – in chapter 19 of the *Kokinshû* (905).

よのなかはいかにくるしと思ふらむこころのの人にうらみらるれば 元方  
 yononaka wa ika ni kurushi to omouran kokora no hito ni uramirarureba motokata  
 world-withn-as-fr painfully thinkng!/?/: many/masses of people-by begrudgd/hated

*How it must pain the World to know  
 that many bitter people hate it so!*

The poet is none other than Ariwara no Motokata, author of the first poem in the *Kokinshû* which plays with the arbitrary nature of our construction of time (pg.147). While looking at things from the looked-upon's point of view, the poem indirectly tells us a lot of complaining about the state of the world *i.e.*, *society*, has been going on. Likewise, Shokusanjin's tells us, *or should tell us*, that a lot of patting one's own world on the back has. And that takes us to *interpretation*. It seems that critics have overlooked all of this. Rather, the well-known *envious moon kyôka* is simply held to document the buoyant confidence of the Edoite and express Tenmei *kyôka*'s positive attitude (Hamada: 現実肯定的狂歌 1958), as opposed to the negativism of older-style *kyôka*. Edo specialist Tanaka Yûko (1993), even went so far as to claim that Shokusanjin "always admires this real world." *Always*? As good as things were for poets during the two decades that led up to and included the Tenmei era when a tolerant man interpreted the law, the boasting of nationalists must have seemed fulsome to our well-balanced free-thinker. As envious Luna may be a dig at nativist excess through exaggeration *ad absurdum*, in the 740-page monster, the poem is titled: *i dunno*. After all, Ôta also wrote the following *kyôka*, too:

祝 戸をあけてぬれどもさらにいさゝかのかぜさへひかぬ御代ぞめでたき  
 iwai: to o akete nuredomo sara ni isasaka no kaze sae hikamu mi yo zo medetaki  
 celebration: door+acc. opened sleep moreover wind/cold even catch-not hon.era+exclam joy/lucky

*We open our doors to sleep and, what is more, never catch  
 The slightest cold in this, the most blessed, times e'er told!*

One wonders how the above-mentioned scholars would evaluate *that*. Unless those who claim he was *always positive* think people never caught colds, this poem should set them straight! Ôta was, like Bokuyô, positive, in that he sought the good in everything, but he was well aware that the society was far from perfect and did not worship what was. The positivism reflected in his poems was not directed toward society but personal, along the lines of an assertion made by Robert Herrick:

*THE PRESENT TIME BEST PLEASETH.*

*PRAISE they that will times past ; I joy to see  
 Myself now live : this age best pleaseth me.*

The fact is that by Ôta's Tenmei era, "we are living in tranquil times" was less an observation than a stereotype and long-accepted conceit in poetry dating back further than *The Parrot Cage*. Here are two old examples.

いにしへのよろひに替る紙子さへ風のいる矢は通さざりけり 蓮生法し 古今夷  
曲集 *inishie no yoroi ni kawaru kamiko sae kaze no iru ya wa tosarikeri renshô?*  
long-ago/ancient-times' armor-w/ exchanging paperrobe even wind shoots arrows-as4 pass-not

*A paper robe in place of ancient armor, still a man of parts,  
Can rest, safely protected from the cold wind's chilly darts!*

太刀は鞘に治る御代は腹つゝみ うつやうたすやたんほゝの城 友易 有馬下  
*tachi wa saya ni osameru miyo wa hara tsuzumi utsu ya utazu ya tanpoponoshiro tomoyô*  
thick-sword-as4 scabbrd-in contrl hon.reign-as4 belly-tomtom beat or beat-nt dndln-frt

*Beating our tumtums full of meat, swords rusting in their sheaths,  
We're off to Fort Dandelion to shoot, or not to shoot, the breeze!*

~~~~~  
*My warrior's pride safely sheathed, this full tum-tum is all I beat –
Dandy times indeed when visiting Ft. Dandelion is dubbed a feat!*

The first poem is from the first major anthology of *kyôka*, the 1666 *Kokin-ikyokushû* published barely a generation after the last remnant of pre-Tokugawa warfare, the Shimabara Rebellion. Paper-robos, a good implicit contrast with armor, were in fashion, particularly good against the cold and beloved by the elderly. Tanpopo-no-shiroyama or Dandelion Fort Mountain 多舞保々能城山 comes from the second Arima book (1678) in a *kyôka* baedeker 地誌所載狂歌少. Dandelion was associated with drumming rather than lion-teeth in Japan and tummy-drumming goes back to ancient China as a symbol of contentment. (オマケにタンタン狸の気配もしませんか?). The peace theme became commonplace in *haikai*, and *zappai* and *senryû* long before Tenmei *kyôka*. Ôta *et al*'s challenge would have been to find new ways to comment about it. He does.

長生をすれば苦しき責を受く めでた過ぎたる御代の静けさ 四方赤良
nagaiki o sureba kurushiki seki o uku medeta-sugitaru miyo no shizukesa 1783?
longlife do-if/when painful weight+acc receive joyful-excessive hon. reign's tranquility

*What tranquil times! But too many blessings has a cost:
Live long and you will come to bear a heavy cross!*

Who knows if young Ôta (Yomo no Akara) wrote from the perspective of one suffering the ravages of old age or having to care for many aged in-laws, suffice it to say, he was familiar with and played the stereotype from the start. This does not mean there were no straight-forward paeans to peace in late-Edo *kyôka*. There were, but had to be clever to remain novel.

Akera Kankô's "Slovenly Wife," Fushimatsu-no-Kaka's 1785 *kyôka* - "Celebrating With Swords" 寄刀祝 is the best example I know いにしへの 乱れ焼刃もしら鞘にうちをさまれる御世ぞやす國 節松嫁々 *inishie no midare yakiba mo shira-saya ni uchi-osamareru miyo zo yasukuni*. Pounding the sword into the scabbard, she makes peace seem downright erotic, and the adjective for the scabbard doubles as a verb meaning not to know the terrors of war and the Japanese sword terms both defy translation. Here is one by Moto no Mokuami that may be Englished:

あせ水をながして習ふ剣術のやくにもたゝぬ御世ぞめでたき もとの木網
ase mizu o nagashite narau kenjutsu no yaku ni mo tatanu miyo zo medetaki mokuami
 sweat-water+acc flowing-learning sword-skill's useful serves-not hon.-reign+emph blessed 1785

*This reign when the sword-play we master not with blood but sweat
 is of no use whatsoever – Something to celebrate? You bet!*

~~~~~  
*How blessed this reign when we need not stand & fight anyone  
 with the swordsmanship we gain by making our sweat run.*

~~~~~  
*Sweat pouring down we practice the martial art of the sword
 How lucky to live in a time when we warriors are ignored!*

The Penguin translation of this, the last poem in the celebration section of the *Tokuwakago-kyôka-shû* is *Sweat dripping down / As you drill away at / The arts of the sword: / That they're no use, / May this reign be praised* (Brownas & Thwaite trans.) seems too prosaic to be poetry but, hey, the original is punless and relies only on the contradiction of working hard to gain a useless skill proving that times and the rulers are good. Another poem in this anthology specifically lauds the isolationism, or policy of exclusion best understood by reading the testimony of the Russian Captain Vasilii Golownin (see the memoirs of his early-19c captivity in Japan) through an untranslatable pun from *banzai* to the name of a huge sack, *banbukuro*, with a string that draws it tightly closed (しめくゝりよくをさまれる大君の御世は千秋ばん袋かな 酒上不埒 *shime-kukuri yoku osamareru taikun no miyo wa banbukuro kana Sakenoue no Furachi*). Here is a poem dated somewhat later, 1824, and found in a book of *surimono* prints that *can* be translated –

ゆたかなる御代の恵ミやまわさなくさるにもおよふ千金の春 晴雪楼翠巖
yutakanaru miyo no megumi ya mawasanaku saru ni mo oyobu senkin no haru suigan
 affluent-becme hon.reign's blessngs sent-round-not monkey-to-evn reaches 1000gold-spring

*Blessed be these wealthy times when a thousand gold-piece Spring,
 Comes to the monkey who waits with a smile doing nothing.*

Note that Mokuami's poem about sweating for nothing predates the conservative rule that from 1788, suddenly made samurai practice martial arts more and discouraged their socializing with commoners – as the *kyôka* associations did – giving rise to the *bunbu* mosquito squib we will see in a couple pages. And, by the time the last poem was composed, conservatism was *de rigor* and monkeys were in. The poem is brushed in front and slightly above the face of a formally smiling – grinning with a slight grimace suggesting being ever so properly awed – *monkey*, dressed up in propitious New Year robe with a Sacred Shintô hat and a stick with paper folded in a holy way (a great picture by Hokkei!). Issa had observed the same in 1816, *In my country even the monkeys wear top hats* (*waga kuni wa saru mo eboshi . . .*) Well, an *eboshi* hat, at any rate; a second haiku specified the monkey performed holy rites 祈祷. The standard trope, “a thousand-gold-piece spring” implies the offerings. The *kyôka* fuses two major concepts 1) a celebration of fortunate times extending to all, even monkeys lucky enough to be in Japan and, 2) the idea of good fortune coming to you rather than vice-versa – traditionally, the monkey was led from town to town, house to house, but here we have one standing put yet raking in the money. Haiku from 17c Bashô to 18-9c Issa mention foreigners coming to greet, or rather pay obsequence to the Emperor on New Years. So the *surimono kyôka* means that *even a monkey is treated like royalty*. In other words, we have a report on a monkey serving as a hyperbole for a report that “all is well!” and that is a properly propitious tiding to start the New Year when *surimono* were distributed as gifts to clients of the poet-commissioner. Now *that* – unlike the envious moon poem which, I feel is somewhat satirical – is probably a purely positive statement. And, yes, it was the Year of the Monkey.

世の中は皆三味線になりにはけり てれん／＼のおとのみそする 江戸の狂歌
 yo no naka wa mina shamisen ni narinikeri teren teren no oto nomi zo suru c.1707
 world-w/in/society-as4 everyone/all shamisen became: racketX2's sound only!makes

What times are these when the world is nothing but shamisen!
Why strum a cat skin when the real racket is plucking men?

This, on the other hand, is purely negative. Found in the *Parrot Cage* (and elsewhere), it is a typical example of one of the two major types of squib, the general complaint. As such a comment on the times may even be self-reflection and are not directed at anyone, one might think the poet could sign his name but the Confucian idea that the spirit of the times reflected the character of the ruler favored Anonymous. The shamisen has a banjo-like sound but louder, partly because the heavy pick let not a decibel of sound escape the string. It does make a racket, though *teren-teren* is not the usual mimetic expression but *fraud* or a *racket* repeated twice.

天下取事はきらひで尾張には 家中の物を取るがすき也
tenka toru koto wa kirai de owari ni wa iejû no mono o toru ga suki nari
 heavn-below conquer thing-as4 hate-so owari/end-in-as4 homeall-thngs+acc take like

*Seizing the whole damn country would be too much hassle,
 So our rulers stay home to steal from everyman's castle!*

~~~~~  
*Owari, the tail of the earth would not be the head of it:  
 We stay home to empty yours, leaving but the edifice!*

~~~~~  
*Why go out to conquer and rob the ends of the earth
 When loot's close at hand in the land of your birth?*

The original is no mere squib but a bonafide *kyôka* because “in the end (after larger ambitions to power fail)” is homophonous with the name of the domain. Bunzaemon's journal shows he was disgusted with corrupt rulers and held this sort of view. Who knows but the poems are his. If so, the same question arises we might ask for Issa: are poems not meant for publication during the poet's lifetime but content-wise more clearly squibs than most that are published still squibs? *Broadview* calls the *kyôka* it gathered from *Parrot's Cage* squibs 落首抄, but some may not be. One by or about what may be the abbot of the Pure Light Temple 浄光院様上野へ入らせ給ひし時の狂歌 visiting Ueno in 1708: 又鯨上野へとられ増上寺浜ばたに居ていかい御油断 *mata kujira* . . . partly escapes me, but the final play on a caught whale's responsibility for its fate, where the idiom meaning “failure to be wary” literally reads “oil-cut-off/runs-out,” is brilliant, as whale oil was used for lamps and “Pure Light” . . .

~~~~~  
 Now that we have seen something of the diversity of so-called fallen-heads/poems 落首, let us see some classic squibs, many famous, more or less as-is from the 740-page Monster. First, from the chapter titled *Mosquitoes, Martial Preparedness & Fallen Heads*:

世の中に 蚊はどうるさきものはなし ぶんぶというて 夜も寝られず 南畝?  
*yononaka ni ka hodo urasaki mono wa nashi bunbu to iute yoru mo nerarezu shokusanjin?*  
 world-in mosquito-amount bothersome thing-as-for (is)not. ‘bunbu’ saying, night even sleep-cannot

Bun=humanities, Bu=martial-arts

*There is nothing  
 half so irksome, or small  
 as the mosquito*

*And when they go ‘bunbu’  
 we cannot sleep at all!*

*What is as big  
 a bother, yet so minute  
 as the mosquito!*

*When they their ‘bunbu’ toot  
 Woe to any man who'd sleep!*

The mosquitoes are slightly out-of-tune. Usually, they hum *bun* or *bun-bun*. Here the second nasalized “*n*” is cut short to sound a word written in Chinese characters as 文武, i.e., *writing* (& other cultural activities)+*martial* (arts), referring to Kansei Reform (1787-1793) policies aimed at re-instilling a martial spirit in the warrior class that did not need to be told to practice the literary arts because they already did. The unsigned poem is famous because suspicion that Ôta Nanpô was the author is said to have been one cause for his being forced to retire after a decade of active *kyôka* composition and organizing. He was, after all, a famously heavy-drinker and all-night carouser – did his teenage *nom de plume* Dr. Sleepy-head 寝惚先生 mean he preferred to sleep by day? – and his late-night *kyôka* parties required the participation of others of the warrior class as well. Both his livelihood and his lifestyle would have been affected. This is his:

人はみな おきいづるその あかつきに小便をしてぬるぞたのしき  
*hito wa mina oki-izuru sono akatsuki ni shôben o shite muru zo tanoshiki shokusanjin*  
 people-as-for all waking-go-out that dawn-in/at piss+acc doing sleep+emph delightful

*As day dawns, the whole world rises and out they head,  
 What a delight to take a piss, then, and go to bed!*

Moreover, the exquisite combination of puns, one natural (“trifling,” *ka-hodo*, is idiomatically “mosquito-amount!”) to improve the telling artifice (*bunbu*) is indeed signature Ôta. This next, too, is attributed to him.

曲りても杓子は物をすくふなり すぐなやうでも 潰す摺子木  
*magarite mo shakushi wa mono o sukuu nari sugu na yô demo tsubusu surikogi*  
 bent even/though ladle-as-for things scoop-up is; straight appear even crushing pestle

*It can scoop as much as it is able, because it's bent, the ladle;  
 Straightened out, you get a tool to grind and crush – a pestle.*

The Kansei Reform was accused of harming rather than helping the people. *Bent* means *crooked* or *corrupt* and Now, three more *rakushu*. *Sukuu*, or “scoop” is a homophone for “help.” The first probably never left Issa's journal (文政句帖 6.8); the second is well-known; the third is courtesy of the world-wide web.

石はこびなげきこりツゝしめし野ゝ人の油にひかるしろ哉 一茶  
*ishi hakobi nageki koritsutsu shimejino no hito no abura ni hikaru shiro kana issa*  
 stone-carrying lamenting-while marked-off fields' peoples' oil by shines castle!

*Carrying stones and chopping trees, lamenting keep-out signs  
 But elbow oil, grease of man – that's why this castle shines!*

~~~~~


白河の清きに魚も住みかねて元の濁りの田沼恋しき 大田か
 shirakawa no kiyoki ni uo mo sumi-kanete moto no nigori no tanuma koishiki
 white-river clean/refreshing-in fish even live-cannot origl. murky paddy-marsh miss

*It's hard to live in clean fast-waters, even for fish:
 They miss their paddy-marsh comfortably brackish.*

~~~~~  
 御祭は目出たいあらの御吸物 だしばかりにてみどころはなし  
 omatsuri wa medetai ara no osuimono dashi bakari nite mi dokoro wa nashi anon  
 hon+festival-as-for joyous fishbone soup stock alone-with condiments place-as4 not

*The festival, once such a joy, is New Year's soup: all stock.  
 No goodies but float to greet the eye. The rest is under lock.*

Issa (last page) uses an old *waka* pun on *tree-cutting=lament (nageki)*. A preface notes the castle was Minister Tanuma's doing. The second poem looks back on that corrupt but thriving time. Shirakawa=white-water was an a.k.a. for the clean new Reformer, and "paddy-marsh" the meaning of Tanuma, the corrupt minister-developer whose lax/tolerant policies sparked a literary explosion including Tenmei *kyôka*. The well-known poem holds water but, like Issa's, is poor poetry, while the last squib is a masterpiece – perhaps one of the top Tenmei *kyôka* masters composed it. The basic *float* shouldered by the men of a shrine, written 山車 "mountain-car," is pronounced *dashi*, as is *soup stock*. The missing *condiments* (there is a hint of sea bream) and *seeing* are both *mi*, and refer to the dance floats/stages 踊り屋台, million lantern floats 万灯台, bottomless floats 底抜屋 entertainment tents & other such extras that the dastardly new 寛政三年 1791 sumptuary laws forbade the (Edo ward) Kanda Myôjin Festival.

太平の眠りを覚ます上喜撰 = 蒸気船 = たった四杯 = 隻 = で夜も眠れず 無名  
 taihei no nemuri o samasu jôkisen tatta yon hai de yoru mo nemurezu anon. 1853  
 indolence/pacific sleep-from wake jôkisen(tea)/steam-ship just 4cups/ships-from night=world sleep-can't

*Stolid folk may be roused from their slumber –  
 Just four packets of Joy Tea to stay up all night.*

~~~~~  
*The Pacific ocean has awoken from its slumber,
 Just 4 steam ships & the world can get no sleep.*

This anonymous masterpiece, in every textbook of the Opening of Japan, is surely the best known *rakushu*. This was a time when fearless Japanese fishermen tossed pornographic picture-books up to the delighted Yankee seamen (to the prissy officers' disgust and chaplain's outrage) and traded fish for whatever novelties they might obtain in exchange, while the rest of the country was thrown into a tizzy as terrified land and tradition-bound authorities and those who served them worked round the clock to throw up

ramparts of fake forts on the hills overlooking the river Perry ascended. It would seem only two of the four “black ships” were steam-powered and even those were only partly steam-powered to supplement the sails, but no matter, the fact Japanese already had a word for such ships, *jôkisen*, that could be punned into the name-brand tea *Jôkisen* (up-joy-select), is in itself proof of how ready Japan was for the greater world. So, now that we have seen the best-known squibs, let us go back to some that are recognized and reprinted but not commonly encountered.

金銀をつかい捨てたる馬ぞろえ 将棋に似たる王の見物 安楽庵策伝 醒睡笑より
kingin o tsukai-sutetaru uma-zoroe shôgi ni nitaru ô no mimono anrakuan sakuden 1623?
 gold silver+acc using-throw-away horse-parade shôgi/chess-to resembles king's spectacle

*Gold and silver thrown away for what! Horse play?
 Royal spectacle indeed! A chessboard walks today.*

In spring 1581, Japan's first unifier Nobunaga put on the most spectacular parade ever seen in Japan. The generalissimo rode his favorite recent gift from the West, a magnificent Arabian the Visitador Valignano S.J. had obtained for him, in the horse parade, & showed-off his borrowed Africans (men). The original metaphor is *shôgi*, like chess, a variant of the second best board game (*go* is the best), including knights & elephants (castle). The poem, netted on the web, is credited to Anraku Sakuden. That means it was likely put into the mouth of a character in his 1623 book *Laughs to Banish Sleep*. Nobunaga had a famously short temper. Had Sakuden posted the poem back then, he would not have lived to become Japan's greatest comic story-teller.

花よりも団子の京となりにけり けふもいしいしあすもいしいし 『寒川入
hana yori mo dango no kyô to narinikeri kyô mo ishi ishi asu mo ishi ishi anon 道筆記
 blossom-more-than-dumpling-capital has become! today ishi x 2 tomorrow ishi x 2

*In Kyôto has it come to pass that dumplings beat blossoms, at last?
 Today, it's "ishi!" "ishi!" and tomorrow will be no ishier!*

Nobunaga, not knowing he would soon be assassinated, set about making the mother of all castles for his selected heir in 1569. It was like building a pyramid, though this king, unlike a pharaoh, tied a tiger hide to his waist he could sit upon, and played foreman, barking orders himself. Stone is *ishi*. So, too, *dumplings* (usually *dango*) in wifely argot (女房詞), as is the pronunciation of *oishi* or “yummy” in this capital city famed for its flowers more than wealth or food (which mercantile Osaka boasted). As a laid-back place, it was the antithesis of the saying “dumplings beat blossoms” or *food over bloom*. All this noisy stone-moving activity, evoked by the triple pun *ishi* used as a mimetic adverb, evidently bothered

the anonymous poet, as did the hardening of what had been the soft capital (except for the mountains of warrior monks Nobunaga slaughtered).

大こうのもととはきけど糠みそに打ちつけられてしおしおとなる
taikô no moto wa kikedo nukamiso ni uchi-tsukerarete shio-shio to naru takuan
 daikon(hideyoshi)'s basis-as-for asked-if, nuka-miso-in throw-soak/pickled limp becomes

You ask about making daikon pickles? Thrown into nuka miso, they become soft.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
You ask about Hideyoshi's situation? Ieyasu pickled him, and he's turned softy.

Takuan made this allegorical report to a friend about Nobunaga's successor : *Taikô* 太閤, "imperial advisor," the title the late-16c unifying shôgun Hideyoshi gave himself. *Daiko* is colloquial for *daikon*, huge radish. The character for *nuka* (*nuka-miso* salted rice bran paste) is 糠; the second for Ieyasu, founder of the succeeding Tokugawa dynasty, was 康. The first name pun requires the mind's ear; the second its eye. ★ *Takuan* is a yellowish daikon pickle; one etymology credits the crotch-scratching monk (1573-1645) w/ its invention. If shared, it could have been a squib.

上からは明治だなどといふけれど 治明と下からは読む 無名
ue kara wa meiji da nado to iu keredo osamarumei to shita kara wa yomu
 above-from-as-for meiji is etc. said, but control-not as below-from read

Though from above, Meiji reads *meiji*, i.e., "brilliant rule" —
 From below, it's *osamarumei*: "Control? Who do they think they fool!"

After centuries of shogunate rule, the creation of an Imperial state with democratic features and a mandate to modernize before colonialization by the Occident was not easy. As always, folk suffered. One way to show resentment was to mess with names. The new era of Meiji 明治(1868-1912) was *reversed* 治明, which, with vertical writing, is to say *turned upside-down*. It is also pronounced in the native Japanese way rather than Chinese-style which brings out the meaning of the characters.

~~~~~  
 So much for classic squib. I am more interested in personal than public *kyôka*. Unfortunately, most are mostly hidden away in journals and diaries. Only one theme stands out for being personal yet of public enough to have been posted or sent around. What is it? *Kabuki actors*. Japanese really, really got excited about them. The 740-page monster boasts several borrowed from 19c *surimono* (found in books by McKee and/or Carpenter who have more). Here, we shall see just one, a rare old example by the master of light *kyôka* with whom we began this essay.

またと世にある物でない過去未来げんざへもんがまひのなりふり 半井ト養 1670  
*mata to yo ni aru mono de nai kako mirai genzaemon ga mai no narifuri bokuyô* ト養狂歌拾遺  
 again world-in exist thing-as4 not, past future genzae=present=mon's dancing/acting's appearance/moves  
 女かとみれば男なりけり 業平のおもかげはむかし男なればいまは見ず 当世はやりし源左衛門おもしろ  
 の海道くだりやなにとかたるとつきせじとおもへば 絵にかきて歌よみ侍れとのたまひければ

*"Genzaemon's appearance is something extraordinarily special that would never be seen in the past, in the future, and in the present."* – Takanashi's working translation.

Narihira could pass for a woman in writing, but  
 who could pass in person like our kabuki star!

*There never was  
 and never a Genzaemon's  
 likes we'll see –*

*Mannerisms très bon,  
 he's soi-disant it cannot be!*

*Will there ever  
 a genzaemon be, and was  
 there ever one  
 whose dance soi disant  
 was un, dos, très . . . bon!*

This is the first example of a *kanji pun* in the analysis section of a paper by linguist Takanashi Hiroko about the relationship of orthography (in Japanese, various scripts for writing words), and the cognition of puns. It is one of Bokuyô's trickiest poems and the sort of thing that might be posted as a broadside. Addressing the specifics of the poem. 1) The "present" hiding in the Genzaemon's name is properly *genzai*, but *i* and *e* sounds are indistinguishable in parts of Japan so the pun is tighter than it seems. 2) The incorporation of philosophical (?) terms for time rather than the usual literary rhetoric 空前絶後 *kûzenzetsugo*, *air/vacuum-before extinct-after* (i.e., an exceptional skill or event) to pun into what was *present* in the actor's name is extraordinary. 3) My pun on "again" (*a genzaemon*) did not so much translate as *replace* the original (as logic demands an "elsewhere" added to "in the present."). Call it "lost & found in translation." 4) While *mai* means dance/s, it is dance-as-performance (opp. *odori*, religious or social dancing). A *kabuki* performance is wholly stylized movement, which could with equal justice be called acting or dance. *Mai* is movement-oriented, so I compromised with *mannerisms* for my first reading while maintaining the continuous flow of the original with the help of a poor pun for the sake of rhyme in the second. 5) No foreign words are in the original, but Bokuyô sometimes used them, so . . . .

♪ **Buddha's Head.** Bokuyô's poem on the quake-felled head as a sleeping Buddha gets a take-off encore nine years after his death in a *kyôka baedeker* 地誌所載狂歌抄 book about returning home to Edo 故郷帰の江戸咄 (1687). Titled 東ゑいざん *tôeizan* or Eastern Mount Hei: 釈迦仏のみくしは前にねはんぞう 是ぞ誠のぢしん 成仏 *shaka butsu no mikushi wa mae ni jôbutsu kore zo makoto no jishin seibutsu*. I am not sure I get it, so discussion will await a future edition.

♪ *Squib Excerpts from “Parrot Cage Records, or “Reports from the Parrot’s Cage”* ômurôchû-ki 1684-1717 鸚鵡籠中記落首抄,” Asahi Bunzaemon’s Journals. in the 狂歌大観 参考). I cannot tell how many if any of the poems he wrote for I have not seen the journal, itself, but only what *Broadview* excerpts, namely the poems and a bit of a preface for some. I follow the pronunciation of Asahi’s name most common on the net, but have also seen it as Monzaemon.

# Extreme Hyperbole, or Unbeatable Metaphor

むさし野にはばかりほどの団がなあふぎてのけむふじのむら雲 富士真行草 元禄 3  
*musashino ni habakaru hodo no uchiwa gana aogite nokemu fuji no murakumo getsudôken*  
musashi moor-with extend amount's fan wish(for), fanning drive-off fuji's flocking-clouds

*Give me a fan as wide as Musashi, the more to move the air!  
You see Mount Fuji's clouds? I'd blast them out of there!*

This, Getsudôken's 'test-brush' 試筆, or *first-writing* of 1691, is the poem behind the title of his book with over 2,000 of his *kyôka* written from 1691-1703. If you recall, Japanese desired to start off the year ambitiously by seeing Fuji, if only in a dream, and this moor from where it could be seen on a clear day, was famous for being the most open space in Japan, one from which no celestial object is blocked from view. An Issa *kyôku* points out that not one dog poo is not stabbed by a moon-beam むさしのや犬のこふ家も月さして *musashino ya inu no kôka mo tsuki sashite*). The title of the book reflects the poet's unabashed love for hyperbole and, perhaps his aim to think lofty and live large. What makes Getsudôken's *kyôka* special is the combination of wish and hyperbole. Most hyperbole is imaginative description. Here is a typical yet exceedingly sharp example:

かみそりのはよりもうすきゑりをきて くひのきれぬはふしきなりけり 竹斎  
*kamisori no ha yori mo usuki eri o kite kubi no kirenu wa fushigi narikeri chikusai*  
razor's blade morethan thin collar+acc wearing, neck cut-not-as-for strange is! 1623?

*Wearing a collar  
worn thinner than the edge  
of a razor blade*

*It's a wonder my head  
still sits on my neck!*

*With my collar  
thinner than a razor blade  
This news of note*

*It's nothing but miraculous  
I have yet to cut my throat.*

Who knows if the author of the *Tales of Chikusai* the fictional wandering *kyôka* master was himself poor, but this hyperbole certainly suggests it. When one's possessions can fit in a matchbox, or be carried out under one's finger nails, such clever words are all one has to enjoy or even boast, and thinking one has gained *something* from one's suffering, though it be no more than a good hyperbole, makes it seem almost worthwhile. Blues and hyperbole go together and prove what the intelligent poor realize: *catharsis comes from laughter as well as tears*. Now, as it so happens, there is a charming *kyôka* by a friend of Shokusanjin, a particularly large man living in a tiny rented house – and Japanese interior dimensions are tiny to begin with – that uses the closest thing Japanese had to a matchbox, a fire-striking box (*hi-uchi-bako*) as a hyperbolic metaphor. The box

kept a flintstone and a piece of metal – see *Topsy-turvy 1585* (another 740-page monster of mine) ch. 14-1 (“*We [Europeans] strike the fire with our right hand and hold the flint in the left; they [Japanese] strike with the left hand and hold the flint with the right*) for the details, which happen to be amazing – there are good reasons for the reversal and sparks were also put to literally charming uses! Be that as it may, the *kyôka* poet did not, ala bluesman, keep his possessions in that box. He lived in that fire-striking box – not to be confused for a tinder-box, though it probably was – and joked, playing on what must have been a brand-name, Fuji, about its being an “inexhaustible” or “none-like-it” source of fire (Mount Fuji may be written as “inexhaustible” 不尽 or as “not-two” 不二 so these are among its connotations – a hell of a way to gain meanings isn’t it!). Why? Because he kept striking his head on the door and window frames so *sparks* flew from his eyes! Unfortunately, despite the common connotation of “strike,” the poem won’t English for lack of a common idiom. To keep the hyperbole witty, we must change it by turning that house into something other than a matchbox:

此家はたとへのふしの火打箱かまちで打て目から火が出る 大家裏住 d. 1810  
*kono ie wa tatoe no fuji no hi-uchi-bako kamachi de uchite me kara hi ga deru ôya urazumi*  
 this house-as-for proverbial Fuji fire-strike-box sickle=>door-frame-w/ striking eyes-frn fire comes out

*Life in a flat no bigger than a closet observatory –  
 If I but turn about, I hit my head and see stars.*

When *our* heads strike things we do not see *sparks*, but *stars*. Obviously, the hyperbole has diminished but the larger allegory has been saved in form if not in content. Still the balance of puns leaves English in the red. In the original, the frame, or *kamachi*, includes, or rather, starts with a pun on sickle, or *kama*, pieces of which were typically used for the metal.

..

~~~~~  
 Getsudôken’s fan and the above indicators of poverty are anomalous, or at least a rare examples of hyperbole hard to fit into any other chapter. Most hyperbole is more a means than an end; it *serves* to develop other themes, and gathering the best would strip other chapters of some of their most interesting poems. Several pages of examples that were in the first draft of this chapter have just been removed for that reason. In other words, this chapter is *cancelled*. If you would see a large sampling of Japanese hyperbole gathered together, search for Blyth’s books of translated old haiku. In one of his two major series, he gives fifty or a hundred haiku about summer heat, one after another. There you will find it in the form of “*as hot as*” this or that. As for *kyôka* hyperbole, summer heat would not

seem to be a favorite subject perhaps because early mad poets, being aristocrats vacationed in the summer and the later mad poets did not care to play second fiddle to *haikai*. However, there seems to have been *kyôka* hyperbole contests on particular subjects not all of which were found in *haikai*. At this time, your translator does not know how many of such made it into print and of those, how many are real and how many are fictional, i.e., created by the authors of the story books that tend to have them. Here are three from a half-dozen coming from a book of essays that appeared together in the *Dictionary of Kyôka Appreciation*. They contest smallness and recall the contrary metaphor of tall-tales boasting gigantic creatures and natural powers – Davy Crockett riding twisters and lassoing the moon, etc. – in 19c Usania.

芥子粒の中くりあけて堂建てて一間囲うて手習をせん 理斎随筆 狂歌鑑賞辞典
keshi tsubu no naka kuriagete dô tatete itoma kakôte tenarai o sen from rizai essays c. 1830?
 poppy seed's inside scooping-out temple/hall building one-room surrounded brush-practice do-will

..

*I'd excavate a poppy seed to raise a mighty edifice
 w/ a room of my own where I might sit & edit this!*

髪筋を千筋に分けて面をとり そのかげにすむ君ぞ恋しき 同
kamisuji o sen-suji ni wakete men o tori sono kage ni sumu kimi zo koishiki ditto
 hair-strand+acc 1000-strands-into splitting finishing that shade/thanks-in live you/love+emph. dear

*One strand of your hair into a thousand I'd split, plane & finish
 a shack to live in the shade of this love that won't diminish!*

蚊のこぼす涙の海の浮き島で砂拾うて千々に砕かん 秀吉の御前で無名人
ka no kobosu namida no umi no ukijima de isago hiroute chichi ni kudakan anonymous
 mosquito's dropping tear's/s'sea-on floating-island-on sand pick-up a 1000 pieces-into break-would

*One grain of sand from the shore of an isle in a sea
 of tears shed by mosquitoes I'd break into a thousand pieces*

~~~~~  
*Into a thousand bits I'd break one grain of sand from the shore  
 of an isle in the sea made of one mosquito tear-drop.*

The first creates a tiny room of his own for writing, or brush practice. Please pardon your translator's editorial reading. The second in the original ends in a boring "you are so dear!" The third, in the original, starts with a common metaphor – a minute quantity of something, such as say pity, or a donation, might be called tear/s of a mosquito – which it takes literally to create its fantasy. This poem was said to have been composed for a contest, or rather for a prize, judged by the Shôgun Hideyoshi. If you want a rhyme on the last reading, just add ", no more" to the "tear-drop."

♪ *Something Akin to Hyperbole that also might have had a chapter: call it Mad Metaphor.* One example found in a 1679 *kyôka* anthology:

たくりほくりはきて座頭の行かふる 杖や海月の海老のめならん 友和 銀葉夷歌集  
*takuri-hokuri wa kite zatô no yuki-kouru tsue ya kurage no ebi no me naran yûwa*

The Troupe Head 座頭 I.e., Blind Man

*Clickity-pop down the street, the blind troupe leader glides;  
 As a jellyfish, his cane would be the shrimp – its eyes!*

Shrimp are sometimes found hanging out convivially between jellyfish tentacles. Shogakukan's OJD (日本国語大辞典) defines 'the jellyfish's shrimp' as a metaphor for the blind leading the blind, but that I believe is wrong; Shogakukan's large proverb dictionary, including the same example, correctly defines it as individuals of different abilities combining to make do. The *kyôka*, obviously, followed the correct interpretation. Jellyfish (*kurage*) was homophonous with *darkness* and idiomatic for *being blind*. (See *Rise, Ye Sea Slugs!* 2003 for some *waka* on *darkness* and the moon jellyfish).

If hyperbole is exaggeration, mad metaphor is an unlikely association.

♪ **1691. The first year of Getsudôken's Big Fan *kyôka* journal.** The Japanese date is Genroku 3. To Japanese, the Genroku era means Bashô. This was three years before the haikai-master's death at age 50.

♪ **Hyperbole Matches.** Japan did not only have "small-tales," if I can coin a word, but tall-tales, for there are folk song ditties that play with the colossal Buddha statue engaged in Gargantuan antics. Expect more examples of hyperbole for hyperbole's sake in a future edition.

# Mad, Madder, *Maddest Benedictions of Them All*

ぐるりと家を取り巻く貧乏神 ・ 七福神は外へ出られず 仙厓義梵 1750-  
*gururi to ie o torimaku binbôgami ・ shichifukukami wa soto e derarezu* Sengai -1837  
circling house+acc taking-wrap poverty-god // seven happy/wealthy gods-as-for outside-to leave-cannot

Asked for a benediction for a new house, Monk Sengai (1751-1837) sang out:

*God Poverty  
encircles this house  
like a sleeve!*

*God Poverty  
encircles this home  
like a wall!*

Then, after the shocked owner complained of the apparent malediction,

*So the Seven Gods of  
Good Fortune cannot leave!*

*The 7 Gods of Fortune,  
They cannot leave at all!*

One of the informal duties of any poet of repute was gracing new houses, births and other things or events with poems serving as benedictions, talismans, mementos, decoration or even certificates or testimonials. Blessing was more a Shintô than a Buddhist duty, but a poet-bonze, especially one with interesting ideas and writing, would always be in demand (Unlike Occidental calligraphy that is almost always neat and ornate craftwork, brushed Japanese shares more with good impressionist, cubic and otherwise partially abstract fine art. Hence, I avoid the word “calligraphy”). In Sengai’s case, despite his messiness – his letters and pictures often resemble a child’s – he was so popular the folk for miles and miles around came bearing paper for him to fill in and return. Apparently, Japanese also brought their own paper to toilets, so Sengai wrote a *kyôka* complaining that people confused his hut for a water-closet. That and a whole chapter on Poverty God/s may be found in the 740-page *Monster*, so there is no need to say more here than affirm that both sorts of gods were part of popular culture. Stylewise, the one-man cap-verse – should we say with a waiting time in mid-poem rather than just a caesura? – may not be that uncommon in books of comic stories. Despite having read few stories, your translator knows another such – a version of the 40-year-old chickadee (pg.208). But it is a good bet that few if any of these will be as surprising as this flower of off-the-wall logic.

The following page will start with a very different house-opening benediction, or charm, haiku-master Issa wrote for a friend. It is one of a score of 31-mora poems composed five months after he read *kyôka*’s first-man, his contemporary Shokusanjin. Issa’s *kyôka* were, on the whole, less successful than his haiku, but this one is a masterpiece that would have been included in anthologies of *kyôka* had he been a *kyôka* poet.

新家賀 雨おちの石の凹に泉湧て 汲ども尽ぬ御住居哉 一茶 文化 10/3  
 amaochi no ishi no hekomi ni izumi wakite kumudomo tsukinu onsumai kana issa d.1827  
 rain-fall-stone's indention-in spring bubbles-up ladle though exhaust-not hon. dwelling!

♪ Presented for a New House ♪

*May a sweet-water spring bubble from the rain-catch stone  
 Filling ladles and never running dry at this, your home!*

The stone stops roof-gutter rain from eating away at the foundations and, over time, visibly indents the stone. Unlike pebbles that really can grow into boulders if they are coral, for a stone of any sort to not only indent but become a spring would take . . . forever.

わが君は千代に八千代に さざれいしのいはとなりてこけのむすまで 無名  
 waga kimi wa chiyo ni yachiyo ni sazareishi no iwa hodo tonarite koke no musu made anon  
 my lord/you-as-4, 1000-ages 8000 ages, pebble/s' boulder/s-into becoming, moss grows until

*Long live my Lord,  
 1000 reigns, 8000 reigns,  
 Until our pebbles  
 into giant boulders grown,  
 boast each a mossy crown!*

Until deciding to follow up Issa's *kyôka* with this *Kokinshû* poem that doubtless helped to inspire him to hyperbolize, I thought to have two chapters, one for charms and one for celebration, but on second thought, realized they really cannot be separated as they often come together. If you celebrate a long life by shouting out "Long live ~ !" you are wishing a person to live longer and that is a sort of charm, is it not? The above *waka*, famous for becoming the core of the national anthem of Japan (though it is a bit closer to a later (拾玉集) variant starting *kimi ga yo*, "my lord's reign") ironically, borrows heavily from one of two poems lamenting the drowning death of a pretty maiden in the 8c *Manyôshû*: "Let my girl's name flow down a thousand reigns until the buds of the young pines of Princess Island are solid moss." (妹が名は千代に流れむ姫島の子松が末に苔むすまでに *imo ga na wa chiyo ni nagaremu himejima no komatsu ga ure ni koke musu made ni* mys #228). Young pines evoke root-pulling festivities and roots, sleeping together, while *musu*, the verb for growing moss (or mold, etc) sounds a bit like *musubu* or unite, so we feel a particularly male chagrin for this death. The girl would not really be his girl friend, for the preface mentions an *otome*, or maiden, but to me, the phrase conjures up an alternative future that was never to be. Perhaps I complicate matters too much, but when you think about it, invoking the power of poetry to extend

not a life but the memory of someone who was in life not really very famous at all is in itself odd. It is possible the editor of the *Manyôshû* chuckled as he chose the poem. So the poem is not altogether different from its progeny that has pebbles growing into boulders. As you might imagine, Japanese *kyôka* poets had a ball with that surreal growth. The parodies could fill a book. The most amusing one, by the bold 16c wit Yûchôrô, is a malediction rather than a benediction, but I will present it here so you can see just how outrageous early *kyôka* parody could be:

君かかほ千代に一たびあらふらし よこれ／＼て苔のむすまで 雄長老百  
 kimi ga kao chiyo ni hito-tabi arau rashi yogore yogorete koke no musu made yûchôrô  
 your/lord/darling's face thousand-reigns-in once wash-seems, soiling-soiling moss grows-till

*Princess, your face looks washed but once in a 1000 reigns  
 Dirty! Dirty! I'll be blunt – Is growing moss your aim?*

~~~~~  
*You, girl, must wash your face but once in a 1000 years,
 Dirtier, dirtier, any day the moss will hide your ears!*

In the 740-page *Monster* I wrote that Yûchôrô took off from the older *Manyôshû* poem and a later *Gôishû* variant of the pebble-to-boulder *waka*, as his *washing* is close to *flowing* and only a *thousand* (no *eight*) mentioned, but I now think the “once in a thousand” and growing moss combination proves it came from the first poem in the *Ryôjin-hisshô*, as we shall soon see. The repeated soiling, soiling (*yogorete yogorete*) cleverly evokes pebbles by rhyming with something they were known to do, *tumble*. *Tumbling, tumbling* would be *korogete, korogete*. The poem following the two additional readings below is probably Tenmei era (late-18c) and is surely the most beautiful take-off on the pebble-to-boulder ever written.

You Rock, Girl!

*Your face it's plain
 has only been washed once
 in a 1000 reigns*

*Dirt upon dirt, without loss
 Until we celebrate its moss!*

Roll Not, Stone!

*Majesty's face
 washed once in a 1000 reigns
 is no disgrace*

*Dirt upon dirt is age's gain,
 Behold the verdant moss in place!*

~~~~~  
 さゝれ石の岩となれる山川に育ちの早き春の若鮎 栗花園 一万 rikkaen?  
 sazare-ishi no iwa to nareru yamakawa ni sodachi no hayaki haru no waka-ayu  
 pebbles' boulder-into become mount. river-in grow-up quickly spring's young sweetfish

*In the mountain stream, where rocks become boulders before you know,  
 How quickly they, too, grow – the young sweetfish of spring!*

This may be kidding about the veracity of the phenomenon described in the old poem but it also brings something to it, a celebration of life, which, when you think about it, is something akin to a pebble growing into a boulder (*i.e.*, a limited sphere of reverse entropy). Here are two *kyôka* parodies of the pebble-to-boulder poem that do not translate well but merit a mention. One is almost baroque and one simplicity itself. Together, they give a good idea of the range of classic *kyôka* parody:

Eg.1, by *haikai* poet Ichû (1638-1711) “*May my lord’s reign of men drunk as plovers, coral & turban shells; / Rolling free on pointed butt, until moss grows, age well!*” (君が代は 千代にやちよにさざいにしころ／＼と苔のむすまで 惟中 狂歌五十人 TK2 *kimi ga yo wa chiyo ni yachiyo ni sazai ni shi koro-koro-koro to koke no musu made*). The obvious pun is the *sazare-ishi* pebble becoming a *sazai*, *turban shell* 榮螺, the first character meaning *prosperity*. Though my OJD can back me up, my pun readings of *chiyo* and *yachiyo* (“thousand reigns, eight thousand reigns”) are riskier. In translation, the take-off veers from the original. In Japanese, they are close.

Eg.2, Yûsai 幽齋公 1534-1610, the top *waka* master of his time changed the poem, in the later *Goshûi* version starting *kimi ga yo*, by just one syllabet, the last. The *made* まで, or “until,” becomes *mame*, “bean/s” (君が代は .. こけのむすまめ in 醒睡笑 TK2). This may be deliberately risqué in the facetious way of the fake dirty folk-song, as bean can mean a woman’s bean, the clitoris, but there was a confection made of a parched bean wrapped in a sheet of green sea-laver and the poem was an impromptu, composed when such was offered to the Imperial prince by the noble warrior-poet 太閤の御前 (『醒睡笑』 in 山田孝雄『君が代の歴史』).

But the *kyôka* poets did not start the ball rolling with the famous *waka*. It first provoked more subtle parody within the proper world of *waka* – or at least some recorded in the minor *Fuboku Wakashô* 夫木和歌抄 anthology.

ふかみとりいはねか上にむす苔や空にのほらぬけふりなるらん 前中納言匡房卿  
*fukamidori iwane ga ue ni musu koke ya sora ni noboranu keburu naru ran masafusa*  
 deep-green boulder’s/s’ upon well-up moss!/?/: sky-into climb/rise-not smoke is!/:)

*Can boulders bubble-over and smoke rise,  
 but not into sky? Ask the dark green moss.*

としへたるいはほか上に雪ふりておひにけらしな苔のしらひけ 源仲正 同  
*toshi hetaru iwao ga ue ni yuki furite oi ni kerashi-na koke no shira-hige nakamasa*  
 years-passing boulder’s upon snow-falling ages+emph.’s moss’ white whiskers

*Snow falling upon an august boulder shows its age;  
 The white-whiskered moss recalls a Chinese sage.*

Both of these are in my quick and loose translation aiming at capturing the wit without losing the gentility of the *waka* style and little else, but even looking at the originals it is hard to say they are what I believe they are, subtle parody, as they play less with words than with ideas. The original source of the second (given by *Fuboku* Ibid) is *A Hundred Waka on Moss* 掘河院御時 百首苔. The *sage* is my mine.

祝 そよ、君が代は千代に一度ゐる塵の白雲かかる山となるまで 梁塵秘抄  
*kimigayo wa chiyo ni hitotabi iru chiri no shirakumo kakaru yama to naru made*  
 lord's reign/times-as-for, thousand-reigns/generations/ages-in once is dust  
 white-clouds touching/positioned mountain-as/into become until

*Until fine dust, each thousandth year adding but one grain  
 Builds a lofty cloud-covered mountain – may you reign!*

This waka (by Ôe Yoshitoki 大江喜言 according to the 1086 *Goshûishû* 後拾遺集), presented as a song, is the very first item in the *Ryôjin-hisshô*, an anthology of 11-13c popular poetry and folk song edited by a son of retired Emperor and poet Go Toba. The preface to the *Kokinshû* mentions dust and dirt rising up from the *fumoto* (base, or skirts) to build a lofty cloud-covered mountain. How a yet-to-be mountain *has* such a *fumoto* to grow from is beyond me and the whole idea seems even less probable than pebbles growing into boulders, but the idea did not suddenly appear from out of thin air. It follows the poetic observation of the Chinese sage Po Chüi (白樂天 772-846) about how great things are accomplished bit by bit – *a journey of a thousand leagues starts with a step and a mountain with a speck of dust*. Then, it magnifies the time period by required for that to happen by allowing just one grain of dust to accrue every thousand years. Such minute change occurring at large intervals comes from elsewhere, probably, the *kalpa*, a mind-boggling large unit of time defined as that required for a huge stone mountain to be worn to nothing by the slightest brushing of a feather upon it once every eon. The idea of measuring a long time is identical to that of a *kalpa* but the type of change by which it is measured as described in the *Ryôjin-hisshô* is essentially the reverse of that, as something *builds up* rather than *wears down*. And, that poem is probably the source of the “once in a thousand years” washing concept in Yûchôrô’s dirty-face parody.

*May my Lord's Reign so free of dust that only one grain  
 appears in a thousand years, last until a mountain rises  
 high into the clouds from an accumulation of the same!*

For reasons beyond the purview of this book, the translator wonders if that *once-in-a-thousand-years* idea might not have more hidden between the lines. “So free of dust” make it explicit. If such a conceptual pivot was



really intended by the poet, it would make the poem one of the most clever *waka* ever written. Ten-thousand to one your translator thinks too much.

わたつ海の亀の背中に居る塵の山となるべき君が御代かな 栄花物語  
*watatsumi no kame no senaka ni iru chiri no yama to naru beki kimigayo kana*  
 ocean's turtle's back-on is dust/trash/mire-mountain-into become-ought lord's-reign!

*Like the chiri on the back of the turtle afloat on the main  
 that became the mountain of youth, so, too, Your Reign!*

The idea of *coral* as a possible source for the concept of a growing boulder was an idea borrowed from modern folklorists interested in the Southern or oceanic roots of Japan. The turtle that grows into the magical mountain of everlasting life, Hôrai, or Merhu is, on the other hand, actually found in many old *waka*, such as this eulogy, from the Tales of Eiga, (1024-28). *Chiri*, between *dust* and *trash*, is not as clean as moss, but it is not crud, either. Would “mire,” *whatever it is*, on the back of the turtle be better?

万劫亀の背中をば 沖の波こそ洗ふらめ いかなる塵の積もりみて 蓬莱山と  
 高からん 梁塵秘抄 *mangô kame no senaka o ba oki no nami koso araurame*  
*ikanaru chiri no tsumori ite hôraisan to takakaran(?) ryôjinhishô #317*  
 kalpa turtle's back+emph sea's waves/water +emph wash-wouldnot?  
 how-much dust's piling being merhu-mt as tall-would?

*The back of that Kalpa Turtle out at sea?  
 It must be washed by waves, and constantly!  
 What dust or trash would stick and build up so  
 that into high Mount Merhu it could grow?*

~~~~~  
*That Kalpa Turtle, is the mire on its back not washed by the ocean?
 For it to grow as high as Merhu . . . now, that's an odd notion!*

This 7-5-7-5-7-5-7-5 song, found in the sundry section of the 12c *Ryôjinhishô* is *not* a charm. It shows the sort of good-natured, logic-based iconoclasm featured in our “*free-thinking*” *kyôka* chapter. Who knows how many so-called folk-songs are actually composed by folk, but, do not songs such as this at least suggest that the rationalism and joy in contradiction Japanese critics and annotators tend to call Chinese or artificial was home-grown? There are also hard to categorize *waka* touching upon that dust. One of the thirteen poems on *chiri* in the 1310 *Fuboku* anthology asked *How much trash and how many mounds must pile up before / Our country becomes a world that stays for ever more?* (いくちりの山をいくへに重ねてもけにわか 國はうこきなき世に 後一条入道関白 *iku chiri no yama o ikue ni kasanete mo ge ni waga kuni wa ugoki naki yo ni ato ichijô?*). Without knowing more of the poet and its original source (千五

百番名所百首) it is hard to say if asking (in a more direct translation) “how many mountains of trash must build how many layers?” is comic, playing with the metaphor we have seen, or a serious observation of the mounds which may be seen in parts of Japan.

君か代はひかりつきせぬ日の本に朝たつちりのかすもえしらず 花園左大臣小大進
 kimigayo wa hikari tsukisenu hinomoto ni asa tatsu chiri no kazu mo e-shirazu palace woman
 lord's reign-as4 light exhausts-not sun's-source-in morning rising dust's # even gainsay-not

Morning Observation

*In this land of the sun with constant light even dust grains
 rise up beyond number to illuminate your reign.*

A light play on the famous Manyô *kokumi* (Imperial country-viewing ritual) poem-as-benediction, where smoke from hearths and birds rise into the sky. This is a benediction but just odd enough for bringing in the dust that in this translation it seems a *kyôka*. Yet the original is so much more subtle and makes such a good observation (why the word was added to the title) that it probably should be called a *waka*. Regardless, it calls for our attention. On a fine day, dust in sun-beams looks beautiful. Who has never marveled at it? Yet, has it ever been celebrated? The poet is a palace woman (only her rank is given) for poet Emperor Hanazono (1297-1348). And, finally, a real Tenmei era *kyôka* to end this section:

世の中のちりし積もりて山とならば 山ごもりせんちりのこの身も 大根太木
 yo no naka no chiri shi tsumorite yama to naraba yama-gomori sen chiri no kono mi mo
 world-within's dust+emph piling mountain becomes-if mt.-hide-do-would dust's this-body/me too

◆ POSTED ON THE DOOR PILLAR OF ÔNE-NO-FUTOKI ◆

*If plain trash grows into mountains, I am a sage!
 & my hermitage, paper-hidden, is the new rage!*

As Nada Inada points out, Shokusanjin once wrote that the real hermit hid in the (bustling) morning market, while the dewy fields were good for relieving oneself (大隠は朝市にあり、雪隠は露次にあり). Here was a famously messy man (「ちりも積もって山田室」と称) in cramped urban quarters, laughing about it. My “sage” is taken from an unlikely allusive pun on *sen*, but justifiable to bring out the deeper wit of the poem which, if I may make the location explicit, may also be read such:

*Trash builds up & mountains make & that leaves me
 Hidden in my hermitage in the middle of this city.*

よき人のよしとよく見て よしといひし 吉野よく見よ よき人よく見 天武天皇
yoki hito no yoshi to yoku mite yoshi to iishi yoshino yoku miyo yoki hito yoku mi emp. tenmu
 good people good-as good looking good-as said goodfield(yoshino) good look good people good look

By the Emperor when He Blessed the Goodfield Shrine

*Good people took a good look, and found it was good:
 Take a good look at Goodfield, good people, look good!*

~~~~~
*good men took a good look and finding it good called it so
 take a good look at goodfield good people look good yo*

Tenmu Tennô ruled from 672-694. The rolling hills that would become the cherry blossom capital of Japan may also be translated *Finefield*, *Lucky Moor* or just left *Yoshino*. “Blessed” in the preface is a literal translation of the verb used for an Imperial Visit. It is a fact that an Imperial visit anywhere raised the stock of that place forever and ever, but as this was – or am I mistaken? – already Imperial property on Cloud Nine, perhaps it actually should be considered a benediction for the facilities and the visitors. In that sense, it is an early example of the literally charming *kyôka*, though not mad for an Emperor was performing his role. Be sure and read this poem in the original as it is also what might be called a *wacky waka tongue-twister*. It makes one wonder the age of the Emperor. And, also note how the poem was transcribed: the scribe, counting those *goods*, wanted to make good on them. *Here* is the original transcription (the above is the *yomikudashi*, rendering into modern orthography or *gloss* that is all most read today) of *Manyôshû* poem #27:

淑人乃 良跡吉見而 好常言師 芳野吉見与 良人四来三

There are eight – suggestive of *plentiful* – repetitions of “good” in its adjectival and adverbial (*well/very/closely*) forms, pronounced *yoshi*, *yoki* or *yoku*, of which seven are single character (5 different and 2 repeated) and one two-character, “four-come” (good people coming from four directions, good luck coming?) the number of which, added to the three following it gives us the lucky number of seven! The five characters each include an aspect of the *good* in the broadest sense: *gentle/graceful* as in a gentleman or noblewoman, *good* as in plain old good, *lucky*, *likeable*, and *aromatic*. The plain old *good* 良 and the *lucky* 吉 are the ones repeated. We might note the latter doubled is a common propitious mark, or charm in the Sinosphere. There is also something not too common we might call *stereo transcription*. The characters *sounding out yoshi to iishi* (good-as said) or “called it good,” *mean* “likeable ordinary/usual word-master/s!”

Praise for earlier poet-namers? For the Emperor? Or the oral 伝承詞人 folk poet who sang a poem (*miyoshino o yoshi to . . .* 中西注が詳しい) of which this may be a variation? Together with the first poem in the *Manyôshû*, where name-asking by an Emperor is glossed as desire for marriage by clever choice of a way to spell out “beautiful scoop holding” as “wishing to have a beautiful spouse” (美夫君志持), also in the third clump of characters, this is a good example of the audio-visual fun/puns Japanese have enjoyed with their writing from the get-go. Unlike the irregular first poem of the *Manyôshû*, this one is a standard 31-syllabet *waka* in form.

~~~~~  
Most blessings are New Year's poems for that was the time to celebrate and pray for the longevity of all, the individual, for all Japanese gain a year as the calendar does, and for the nation that equally ages and renews. Even pebble-to-boulder and Mt. Meru *kyôka* that do not mention that time are generally considered New Year's poems. Many of the haiku translated for my book on the Japanese New Year, *The Fifth Season*, might be called blessings. Let me settle for three here that are more enchanting than charming. One is by Teitoku, who helped make *kyôka* acceptable as a genre. One by Shiki, who discovered that most old *hokku* were not *hokku* but *haiku*. And one by Kyôshi, who ushered in modern haiku after Shiki died.

けさたるゝつらゝやよたれ牛の年 貞徳  
*kesa taruru tsurara ya yodare ushinotoshi teitoku*

*this morning  
the icicles slobber  
year of the cow*

*dripping icicles  
today, call them slobber?  
year of the ox*

鼻息に飛んでは軽し宝船 子規  
*hanaiki ni tonde wa karushi takarabune*

*treasure ships  
how swiftly they sail  
in a nose-wind*

蓬萊に徐福と申す鼠哉 虚子  
*hôrai ni jofuku to môsu nezumi kana*

*on mt. feng-lai  
someone says, “i’m xu fu”  
is it a mouse?*

*who calls out  
“i’m xu-fu” on mt feng-lai?  
why, it’s a mouse!*

Explanations for these poems – each of which represents a theme given a whole chapter – may be found at Google Books, where all of my work in English, including this one, are completely readable. I think of all of them as *kyôku*, the haiku equivalent of *kyôka*, but that is one person's opinion.

~~~~~  
Here, I must be personal. My “mad” translating changed me, that is, *my* writing. First, I wrote poems for my mother's 80th birthday I could not have written (see page 251 of the Monster) and second, I found myself writing a Benediction for the book, itself! Or, maybe for the readers. Who knows! Have you ever heard of such a thing? Anyway, here it is:

B E N E D I C T I O N

空一杯なる我駄作それでも名
お役に立てばプーの脳味噌だ

*If you find this book, so full of naught, of service, nonetheless,
Rename it “The Brain of Pooh” and you, too, will be blessed!*

~~~~~  
狂歌とて天明ばかりとしたがる 手前の目から鱗こそ散れ  
開け胡麻かしよりもかりこそ多き 駄作ながらさくら待望

狂歌集を開けば、お目出度、読み終われば  
桜鯛、一匹ならぬ一首が飾るところを折々  
拝見しながら、何故、大俵もの海鼠どんに  
そういふ名誉を与へなかったのか。外人な  
がら不思議におもったがやっと解かったぞ

狂歌師に鯛ほどにあふ魚なき  
食ふも食われも同じ目出たひ

~~~~~  
The Brain of Pooh. In case you forgot. This was the name Christopher Robin gave to the empty bottle of honey upon which the little stuffed bear called *Winnie the Pooh* floated to safety in the big flood. 蛇足 熊のプーさんが大洪水を乗り越えた蜂蜜の空瓶の舟号、「プーさんの脳」。名づけ親は、むろん、親友のクリストファー・ロビンくん。ただし、英文詩の祝福の言葉「と君も幸運に恵まれる」が三十一音には、入れ切れなかったという訳。しかも **blessed** (神のおかげで恵まれた) という語は昔「痴呆」の婉曲である。

鯛こそ大メデタイと云われても、狂歌の世が広々して、異見は必ずあり、竜宮で忌むべき魚のなきがらを取りかはす世ぞめでたかりける 恋川春町

Mad Poems that are Really Mad, or *The Poet's Revenge*

書物も残らず棒にふる郷の人の紙魚／＼憎き面哉 一茶
shômotsu mo nokorazu bô ni furu^sato no hito no shimijimi nikuki tsura kana issa
print-matter even remain-not pole-on-swing/hometown folks' keenly:paperfish spiteful faces!

The Poet Betrayed

*Like silverfish, they don't give a shit for written stuff,
My countrymen, my ass! They live to eat it up!*

Written shortly after *haikai*-master Issa (1763-1827) finally returned to his hometown after decades in the big city, this *kyôka* fuses *bô-ni-furu* (an idiom for *letting go to waste* – literally, *swing as or on a pole*) to *furusato* (home-town) and turns “intensely” (*shimijimi*) into “silverfish-zilverfish” by repeating the bug’s Chinese characters 紙魚+ditto. The philologist might call it a visual Tom Swifty (But, note: *kyôka* adverbial puns are not limited to describing quotations)! Your translator first imagined Issa’s manuscripts were used to heat baths or wipe arses, as the greater part of a carefully collected superb collection of bawdy English ballads once was.

*Fuck my town of illiterate assholes w/ bad behavior
To them, a book means but one thing: toilet-paper!*

Eventually, I read the headnotes (more common than *footnotes* in vertical format books) to the effect that Issa entrusted something, more likely to be documents concerning his father’s will rather than what I imagined, to someone and returned to find them damaged and/or missing (害失).

*My father's deeds mean squat to my countrymen – in anguish
I look at their faces and all I see are silverfish!*

I have seen this vicious mad poem in Issa’s journal (文化十年) and nowhere else. He kept it under wraps, not copying it into anything he published. This is understandable as it puts down the people of his hometown and he still wanted to live there. But it has been there in the reprint now for decades, yet I have not found one mention of it anywhere. Even one of Japan’s most prolific novelists, Tanabe Seiko, despite her obvious attraction for Issa’s earthy side, failed to find it for the 800-page “faction” novel *Warped Issa* (*hinekureta issa*) it would certainly have graced. As a *kyôka*, it was not in any selection of Issa’s collected haiku that a busy novelist might have had time to read. It caught my eye before I knew anything about *kyôka*, by chance, because I liked Issa enough – or valued my time little enough – to read his journals from start to finish.

Living with Silverfish!

*If they had their way, all books would wipe asses or burn:
The spiteful faces in my hometown, make my stomach churn!*

Pardon the large number of *paraverses*. Your translator cannot help but identify with Issa and that affects his reading. Considered one of the top three or four classic haiku poets today, in his time Issa was but one of a score of top haikai masters, and lacking independent wealth, he was poor his entire life. The acerbic wit that flows from a deftly welded poison pen, or brush in the Sinosphere, is cheap medicine for the soul of all whose well-being largely depends upon the consideration of those who enjoy the security we are denied. And, as writers, we know that, in the long run, the fruit of our resentment may entertain and bring food for thought to others. I had hoped the headnote would be wrong and we were talking about poem journals and books; but not only did the date match the time when Issa was fighting what we might call illegal disinheritance, as the town including the relatively well-off man who was entrusted with his fathers will/s and whatnot, favored those who had been there all along to this poet who spent all of his adult life away, but a variation of the same poem minus the saving grace of the silverfish pun, specified the *shômotsu* or written things were his deceased father's (*waga mida no*). Still, the fact is that by making those *shômotsu* "books," the silverfish come to life and the poem gains broader currency which I would cash in translation.

What Spiteful Faces!

*All books must go: that is their wish –
In my hometown, capital to silverfish!*

The way Issa rewrote and changed his haiku over the decades suggests he would have been delighted with this, but if any reader is not, I have a compromise to suggest. Try a paraverse yourself using "papers" for *shômotsu*. If you come up with something good, please let me know!

*Papa's papers, saved for me, the fruit of his hard labor –
Gone! My hometown's motto? "Silverfish thy neighbor!"*

Sorry! As I wrote the final words on the last page, not intending to do another paraverse as the first rhyme popping into my head for *paper* was "rape her" (the goddess of paper), which had me thinking *papel*, as Spanish is my second language, that in turn sent me to the French word for that insect with paper-like wings, the papillion, and thinking *I had better just stop right now or this book will never get done* I took my break to go

out to feed the cat and cows (my favorite chores), and as I was tugging off hay near the core of the ball – the only time when it is tough-going – a loose rhyme for *paper* came to me, *labor*, followed almost immediately by *neighbor* and shortly – within minutes – after that, *the verbing of the silverfish*, which brings them rhetorically closer to Issa’s original where they are *adverbed*. Though details of the original content, such as “spiteful faces,” are not even hinted at, the quality of the wit has finally been matched and I can rest happy, knowing it unlikely anyone will come up with anything better, unless it be a fine-tuned version of mine, which would be obvious to anyone who read both.

~~~~~  
 女院の御前のひろくなる事は暁月坊が私地に入るゆへ 暁月坊 新撰狂歌集  
*nyôin no gozen no hiroku naru koto wa kyôgetsu-bô ga shiji no iru yue kyôgetsu-bô d.1328*  
 Empress’s hon.+front’s wide become thing-as-for A.-monk’s private-land’s enter/acquire because

*The Empress’s Garden  
 is wider by the acquisition  
 of Monk K’s private grounds.*

*The Empress’s Vagina  
 is wider by Monk K’s privates  
 having entered It.*

Unlike Issa’s totally ignored poem, this one by a monk of Imperial birth sometimes considered to be the first *kyôka* master, is found in many old anthologies and not a few websites. For a *kyôka*, it is famous and more often than not is accompanied by an explanation to the effect that Empress so and so requisitioned part of his property to expand her front garden. And additional notes for modern readers always explain that “private-ground” (*shiji*) puns what was slang for a man’s privates and that the term *gozen* – literally “honorable front” not only refers to the Empress and her garden but her privates that his might enlarge. In other words, this is a case of metaphysical come-uppance. There are more outrageous *kyôka*, but this is the only famous one. And, I believe it to be the only one betraying resentment as powerful as that of Issa’s, though, as we have seen, a few *kyôka* squibs attacking rulers or classes of people betray the anger of their anonymous authors. The original combines both of the above in one pun-enabled poem. Alas, your translator failed to find a way to integrate the two in time for the reading-copy edition of the 740-page *Monster!* But after coming up with the Silverfish solution, he decided it might be a good day to see if he could do it. And, in a matter of minutes, he . . . I did!

*The next monk she fucks with will slip right out and beg her pardon:  
 How wide it is after taking in mine – Damn, the Empress’s garden!*

There are two things wrong here. It is too obscene – not because I wanted

to be dirty, mind you, but because the rhyme “pardon” had to justify itself and that is how it did it. Rhyme is now, as ever, a dangerous thing (Look what *rod* did to the poor poet-editor in Orwell’s *1984* who could not help leaving in Kipling’s *God!*). In a few minutes, the clincher –

*The Queen whose front garden ate his messed with the wrong monk-bard:  
Kyôgetsu left hers so damn wide she’ll never take another yard!*

This is like the original in that the poet refers to himself in the third-person and the word referring to the male member, *yard*, is now obsolete. Cotton Mathers, an admirable preacher and physician who worked harder than anyone else to stop the executions of so-called witches in Salem treated an unfortunate man with a hole in *his* (besides the normal one in the glans). No, I do not go looking for these things: I corrected the translation of Chadwick Hansen’s touching book (*Witchcraft in Salem*) – because I scouted and recommended it to my employer, a Japanese publisher – which had that hole just outside his house, in the *garden*. Mistranslations as funny as this stick in the mind; and, speaking of *yards* recalls a barn-door, not open, but with a *kite* nailed to it in an 800-page biography of Darwin I corrected. The idea of displaying a criminal bird to scare off others did not occur to the translator, a biologist and not a farmer. When I found it, the kite had Japanesed into the featherless paper variety!

~~~~~  
ものいはぬおさな口を赤渋の水責とは鬼もしらじな 一茶 文政六年
mono iwanu osana-kuchi o akashibu no mizu-zeme to wa oni mo shiraji na issa
thing sayng-not infantile mouth+acc akashibu’s water-pressing-as4 demons-evn know-not 1823

*Water torture applied to wordless babes? Why, even in Hell,
No demon would think to do what Akashibu does so well!*

~~~~~  
*Forcing water down the throat of a baby – I was a sucker,  
for not even a devil could behave like that Red-pucker!*

Issa, again. Sorry for the bias in my sampling, but *kyôka* in *kyôka* collections are seldom personal and those that are tend to be written in the course of gift-exchange, celebrations and other social pleasantries. It just so happens that Issa is the only poet whose work – including all of what might be called his private poems – I am well-stocked in. Be that as it may, unlike Shokusanjin, who may have been a samurai but was still young and poor, and as we saw (pg.31) lost a baby because his wife could not make much milk and he could not afford to hire a nurse, Issa was an old man and *finally* had enough – barely enough – income from his contest-

judging and disciples to afford a bargain-rate wet-nurse. He writes that the father of this dry wet-nurse whose name translates as “red-astringent” 赤渋 (Akashibu) – today, the name of a disease afflicting mulberry leaves – claimed she was *plump, fed on rice cake* (a symbol of luxury) and *whiter than snow* (as opposed to skinny and dark, like poor people), boasting *milk that gushed out “like sake from a just unstopped keg,”* but, when he met his hitherto healthy son at his wife’s funeral, he was a bag of bones. It turned out Akashibu’s breasts were flat as a man’s. She faked milking babies while slipping them water. I added “I was a sucker” in the second reading because Issa was taken in by a family of hucksters. The first version of the poem had the plain “forcing water” (*mizu o hameru*), but there is no wit in that so I give you the revised version, as the technical term for a punishment “water torture,” one of many once used to make Christians recant! – is what makes this poem not only a complaint but a *kyôka*.

Unlike the silverfish poem, however, the personal name and ambiguity of the charge of water-torture makes a preface necessary even for Japanese readers. Whether or not such a poem belongs in anthologies is hard to say. Some old *kyôka* anthologies have prefaces for most poems and some have none. Both sorts of presentations have their charm; a well-crafted preface can make the entire poem seem a delightful punch-line rather than a boring summation for what has already been explained.

Believe it or not, over 700 years before Issa had a bad wet-nurse, we already find a mad poem about the same problem:

*hakanaku mo omoikeru kana chi mo nakute hakase no ie no menoto sen to wa*  
senselessly+emph. to think! milk=knowledge even without, professors’ nanny be-would!

*A wet-nurse, with no more brains or milk than a tit-mouse?  
How unwise for wizened dugs to shame a scholars’ house!*

Published in 1086 in the *Goshûishû* (gsis #1217), this is the first of a two-poem exchange between well-known scholar spouses Ôe no Masahira no Ason and Akazome Emon. When a woman who came to serve as a wet nurse produced only a thin stream of milk, the husband, Ason raged. In Cranston’s translation, which does not, like mine, rely upon a bird Japanese know nothing about that happens to be the most frequent visitor to the feeder only two feet from my monitor: “*What a scatterbrain – / To think she could squeeze by / As a wetnurse here / In a learned doctor’s house: / Little learning and less milk!*” (*Waka* vol. 2A pg 552). The original plays on a pair of puns: *frivolously=hakanaku=lacking* and *milk=chi=knowledge* to berate the nanny. The good-tempered reply by his wife, who

was the better-known poet (one of her poems would become immortalized in the *Hundred Poets One Poem* anthology), is far from mad. This time, starting with Cranston's translation, "*Let's be satisfied / If at least her native wit / Deserves respect – / Scant schooling and thin milk, no doubt, / But enough to squeeze her in.*" Here (gsis#1218 ditto), the good professor in whose book I found the poem had to split and thus lose, the main pun *scant-learning* = *hosoji* = *thin-milk* but uses *squeeze* in both poems to maintain the flow of thought. My reading of the original is more like this:

*sa mo araba are yamatogokoro shi kashikoku wa hosoji ni tsukete arasu bakari zo*  
 well even is if be! big-peace(japanese)-heart/mind+emph.polite/smart-as-for,  
 thin-knowledge=scant-milk-with respect-to be-let (arazu=is not?)+emph!

(a bit dry, perhaps, but let's keep this wet-nurse)

*What she is she is – does not our native wit set us free*  
*Not to nit-pick like Chinese, but let the little things be?*

You might note that I could not squeeze in the *milk*. But, put right after her husband's poem, I think the context would carry it even without the added title. This might be a good time to point out to mention that I wrote Professor Cranston to express my enthusiasm for his book and, as is my wont, question him where I entertained doubt, to wit: "I suspect the *yamatogokoro* is used as rhetoric for the attitude her hubbie should take and may not, as you write, be defending the wetnurse for having native wit/japanese spirit." In other words, I felt she was saying that he ought to be more "big-peace" (if I may English the Chinese characters usually used for Yamato) in spirit, even if that meant reading *arasu* as *arazu*. Cranston generously thanked me for the additional reading (the general idea, I had not yet cooked up the above translation, about as loose as they come) but stuck to his grammar and his guns: "I still think *yamatogokoro* applies to the nurse." Things are more complex and there is an in-between reading –

*She is what she is and wisdom born of our Big Peace Way*  
*Would not make an issue of two-bit tits: let her stay!*

Here reading of "*arasu*" remains positive as Cranston reads it, but my interpretation of the Yamato rhetoric remains unchanged. I realize I am guessing. The professor has read and translated far more old *waka* than I have. Chances are I am dead wrong. Still, I feel my interpretation makes the exchange wittier and I never mind taking a chance on improving the reputation of poet-as-wit; and, in the case of this poem, I feel it possible I can stir up something rare and interesting when it comes to old poems, a debate. That is because the use of *yamatogokoro* as rhetoric holds more

psycho-history or even political significance than most phrases. I would expect that some of our more opinionated scholars may want to add *their* two-bits. Or, so I hope. I await their readings, my proverbial hat out for what I hope will be enlightening food for thought which may be added to this book as a gloss, or marginalia.

~~~~~  
 石なごのおちくる玉の一二三四五ッ 六七やかましの世や 一茶
ishinago no ochikuru tama no hi fu mi yo itsutsu mutsu nanatsu yakamashi no yo ya
 pebble-game falling stones/jacks' one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight=noisy world!

*In the time a jackstone takes to fall . . ?
 "One!" "Two!" "Three!" I hear them bawl
 "Four!" "Five!" "Six!" Why must they yell?
 "Seven!" rhymes heaven but noise is hell!*

There are degrees of anger. The ancient scholar was irked by the gall of a wet-nurse coming to work with a paltry supply of her goods while Issa was furious about what happened to his documents. The above is an example of Issa mildly angry. It is more a complaint than a maledicta. Issa also had complaints about certain repetitive bird calls getting on his nerves, or geese gagging when a stroke took away his voice, etc. But all are haiku. This is a *kyôka*. Like his silverfish, a single line, as there is no real break in the flow of the original, the pun is not explanatory like mine but natural, turning the eight, *yatsu* into *yakamashi*, or "noisy" half-way through the word. English would need a different content, say, counting farts up to something one eight/ate to match it. But, there is more than a pun in the poem. I feel Issa may have been playing upon Saigyô's hyperbolic metaphor of the transience of life:

石なごのたまの落ちくるほどなさに過ぐる月日はかはりやはする 西行
ishinago no tama no ochikuru hodonasa ni suguru tsukibi wa kawari ya wa suru
 jackstones' falling-come amount-short-in pass months-days-as-for exchange do

*Quick as stones tossed by children in play drop to the ground,
 Old Months and Days leave us when new ones come around!*

As these stones actually drop into *holes* which allude to what we end up in. *As quick as stones tossed by children drop into holes / The months and days, passing, change and on time rolls.* But, to get back to Issa, he famously loved children. He was not so hurting from the deaths of his own children that he hated to hear others because he had not yet had them, he was newly married (for the first time) at 50 or so and might have wanted to sleep in. Or he was under the weather, feeling his age and on

edge. Or, the entire poem might also be meant as a complaint about the meaningless clamor of so-called “news” telling us nothing of worth. Riffing off of Saigyô, his poem may be meant to lament that not only was life all too quick, but all too noisy.

借金の淵におのれとしづみつゝ うき世をうらむとしの暮哉 同文政 5-3
shakkin no fuchi ni onore to shizumitsutsu ukiyo o uramu toshinokure kana issa d.1827
 debt's depths-in self-from sinking-while floating/woeful-world+acc begrudge year-end!

*Knowing I myself dove into debt, as I sink I still hate
 The floating world at year's end: creditors won't wait.*

I added “creditors won’t wait” in lieu of explaining in prose the significance of the end of the year. Debt’s *fuchi*, that deep spot, or pool, in a river usually near a bend that English oddly has no word for, was a typical location for drowning and suicide, at least in poetry. The *uki* world is both that of *woe* and entertainers/ment of the flesh, the former usually written with the Chinese character for *depressing*, the latter, also called “the water trade” by that for “floating.” Issa’s literal take on the “floating” is old hat but the way the elements are paradoxically combined with the bald statement of “hate” results in an extraordinarily powerful *kyôka*. Yes, the expressions are corny; but, if it is doggerel, it is doggerel with a real bite. The original is a finely crafted idiomatic paradox, but we may also imagine how a poor man suffers knowing all that unaffordable entertainment is out there.

世に住ば手をすり足をすりこ木にしてかけ廻る年の暮哉 一茶 文政 2.5
yo ni sumaba te o suri ashi o suri-kogi ni shite kakemawaru toshinokure kana issa
 world-in live-if hands+acc rub/pray legs rub/pray=pestle-into making go round year-end!

*To live in the world of men, our hands rub together, that is we beg,
 While worn down to pestles by year's end, around go our legs!*

This hand and leg/foot rubbing=*suri* with the significance of supplicating for mercy – debts to be paid at the end of the year, here – is the same found in Issa’s famous fly-ku, but with the surprising addition of *~kogi*, that verb becomes a pestle=*surikogi* and another connotation of *suri*=rubbing, namely, wearing down and, if I am not mistaken, *toshinokure* is used rather than the human-activity stressing *shiwasu* to signify the end of the year so *kure* may pun on the begging of an old man.

There are other personal poems as literally *mad* as Issa’s, but they are not necessarily *kyôka*. A betrayed lover in a furious *waka* in the 8c *Manyô-shû* describes the place where his sweetheart or wife – such details matter

not a whit for the point I am slowly getting to – cheated using a word close to the English *damn*, namely *shiko*, or “piss,” three times, or maybe four! If you care to search for and find it, you can count. I recall one *shiko* was used to modify the bedding. The point is this: the poem was not the least bit funny unless you find someone so furious as to spew out “pissing” over and over again amusing. I suppose the editor of the *Manyôshû* thought it was interesting as such, as an illustration of what sort of poetry (?) can spring from a deranged mind. At any rate, it is not a mad poem in the *kyôka* sense, because a *kyôka*, like good blues or country music lyrics, must be written by someone who, “pissed-off” though he or she may be, has the presence of mind to find something that is, if not funny, at least clever enough to bring a slight grin if not a repressed chuckle to the reader and, one would hope, in time, to the poet. I doubt the “pissing” will ever do that.

♪ **Silverfish Book.** A file full of silverfish slowly grows in my computer and will eventually become a book. They are an ideal subject for poetry, as most who write have strong feelings about silverfish. The book is one I would co-author.

♪ **Issa & me.** Why so much Issa? Because I own a set of all his journals and additional books (an encyclopedia of his life, novel and literary criticism). Had another gentleman (David Lanoue) not dedicated his life to Issa, my first books in English would have been all Issa, for when I left Japan such was my intention, and the chain of events that led to this book might not have been forged. Such is life, you run into surprises and try to make them rhyme.

♪ **To Scholars.** If you have all the poems of any Japanese poet and happen to find an odd *kyôka* please send it to me, especially if it is one of those rare, truly mad ones like Issa’s silverfish and Yûchôrô’s yard-stealing Empress, in which case it may be added to this chapter.

♪ **Furusato puns.** *Waka* punning on the *furu* in *furusato* (hometown) as falling rain, snow and flowers, passing years or aging were common, but Issa’s may be the only insulting usage.

Mad Seasons: *The New Year* (once a whole season)

としのうちに春はきにけりひととせをこぞとやいはむことしといあいはむ
toshi no uchi ni haru wa kinikeri hitotose o kozo to ya iwamu kotoshi to ya iwamu
year-within-in spring-as-for came: one-year+acc lastyear-as say-not, thisyear-as say-not

*Spring they say has come today, so tell me if we may,
call this year last year before New Year's day!*

The original is neither the oldest *kyôka* nor, for that matter, ever called a *kyôka*. Nor was it rhymed; but this reading of Ariwara no Motokata's *waka*, the lead-off poem in the second of the three best-known classic *waka* anthologies, is, nonetheless, closer to the *spirit* of the original than the usual boring translation, such as that within Shiki on said *waka*:

Tsuruyuki is a bad poet, and the *Kokinshu* a worthless collection
Take down the *Kokinshu* and open it to the first page. The first thing you
will come across is this really disgustingly insipid poem:

*Toshi no uchi ni / Haru wa kinikeri / Hitotose o / Kozo to ya iwamu /
Kotoshi to ya iwamu* (Spring has come within the old year: shall we call
the year “this year,” or shall we call it “last year”?)

The poem is so silly that it fails to rise even to the level of vulgar wit, as
if one were to say, “This child of mixed blood, born between a Japanese
and a foreigner – are we to call it ‘Japanese,’ or should we call it a
‘foreigner’?” . . . (Brower trans., cited by McCullough, my abbrev..)

Shiki, with Kyoshi, co-father of modern haiku, could not have been harder
on the poem and *Kokinshû* (905) editor, Ki no Tsurayuki for featuring it.
While refreshing to hear someone attack a man and a book revered for a
thousand years, “silly” or not, Ariwara no Motokata's poem embodies one
of the best traditions of Japanese poetry: it plays with cultural constructs.
Tsurayuki placed the poem first because it reminds us that calendars and
editing have no pat solution. And, do not contradictions between lunar,
solar and local (or climatic) years make life more interesting? The snap in
the original is lost by English's boringly descriptive terms “last year,”
“this year” and “New Year's Day,” where the Japanese has the pleasant
ring of real *names*. Shiki, of course, read it in Japanese and *still* was not
impressed. Having grown up with the Gregorian calendar, did he, perhaps,
lack sufficient *feeling* for the pleasure people once derived from juggling
around the polychronic ancient system? Here is another reading:

♪ Do we honor the Sun, or honor the Moon? ♪

*With Spring so soon, what about the Year we're in, if Truth be told
before the Moon, I cannot tell if we should we call it New or Old!*

Japanese poets were inspired to do countless take-offs on Ariwara no Motokata's poem. Here is one by Monk Jien.

雪のうちに春は来にけりよしの山雲とやいはむ霞とやいはむ 慈円 jien d.1225
yuki no uchi ni haru wa kinikeri yoshino yama kumo to ya iwamu kasumi to ya iwamu
 snow-within-in spring-as-for came: yoshino mountain clouds-as say-not, mist/haze-as say-not

*Spring has come to Mt. Yoshino covered with snow
 So, are those banners mist, or clouds? Who knows!*

Here, the nominal difference may underlie the composition, but the explicitly stated one is, rather, meteorological. *Banners* is mine. Only the underlined words (snow, yoshino, mountain cloud, haze/mist) differ from the original. Here is one from a huge early-14c. *waka* anthology.

くれはてぬとしのをはりに春立てさためかねたる我よはひかな 光俊 夫木集 1310
kurehatenu toshi no owari ni haru tachite sadamekanetaru waga yowai kana mitsutoshi
 setting/ending-exhausting-not-year-end-on spring arriving settle-cannot my age 'tis!

*Spring is here before the end of the year – I, no sage,
 confess that now I cannot figure out . . . my own age!*

~~~~~  
*Before the year has rightly ended I am struck dumb  
 How can I tell my age, now that spring has come?*

~~~~~  
*That spring came before year's end is no secret;
 but now I really can no longer tell my own age!*

The common denominator of the three readings of Mitsutoshi's poem is the original, *conceptually* speaking wacky enough to be a *kyôka*, yet stylistically so plain the gains in translation are excessive. What makes the original interesting is that crude or not, it studiously *differs* from Motokata's *waka*. For contrast, here is a *kyôka* for someone whose child was born when the solar Spring fell within the old year by Mitoku 未得, the *haikai+kyôka* master who published the first large personal collection of *kyôka* in 1649, that is similar in concept but follows the original very closely (note: children were born a year-old in the Sinosphere):

年の内の春にむまるゝみどり子をひとつとや言はん二つとや言はん 吾吟我集
 toshinouchi no haru ni mumaruru midoriko o hitotsu to ya iwan futatsu to ya iwan mitoku
 year-within's spring-in born infant+acc one+emph say=celebrate-should, two+emph say=celeb.

*A child born in the spring within the year – what can we do?
 We want to call him “one” and we want to call him “two!”*
 ~~~~~ or ~~~~~  
*We cannot call her “one” and we cannot call her “two!”*

My favorite pre-Edo take-off of Motokata's *waka* is the very first poem of a 14c work called *Cake vs. Wine Poem Match (Mochi-Sake Uta-awase)* found in *Broadview*. There are only ten pairs of poems and they are not called *kyôka*, but they exemplify the best spirit of light verse and the judgment/commentary by p.m. Nijô Nyôbô (二条女房, or ~ Yoshimoto 1320-88), who may have written them, too, is *delightful* and so *gentle* that even with occasional wild flourishes (eg. ~もちゐにぞつき侍らめ) I, unfamiliar with the use of *nyôbô* as an appellation for one serving in high office (he was the p.m.), thought *he* was a woman, the wife of (Emperor) Nijô. This poem match tells us the seed for the wildly imaginative 17c *kyôka* and the highly sophisticated late-18c (Tenmei) *kyôka* was already sown and only needed precipitation to sprout. If just two translations from it are in *The 740-page Monster*, it is only because most are too fine to recreate. This poem was not among those translated (though I may add it):

年のうちにもちはつきけり一年をこそとやくはんことしとやくはん  
*toshi no uchi ni mochi wa tsukikeri hitotose o koz/so to ya kuwan kotoshi to ya kuwan*  
 year-within-in mochi (sweet-rice)-as-for beat+emph. one/whole-year+acc  
 lastyear-as/with roast=>eat-would this-year as/with roast=>eat-would

*Rice cake pounded within the old year – What, then, is true:  
 Would we roast the last year now or should we toast the new?*

~~~~~  
*When we beat this sweet-rice into cake the year was old –
 I say, eat it last year, by the new one it will mold!*

Beside the take-off's echoing the original there are puns such as *yaku*, the usual verb for toasting *mochi*, concealed in an emphatic *ya* and intent to eat *kuwan*. Your translator is not sure he gets it, anyway, so rather than boring the reader, he added a celebratory element to the first reading, which only implies eating but is nonetheless close to the original, and "mold" which is pure invention. But, it can happen:

年こえて花のかゞみとなる餅は 黴かゝるをや曇るといふらん 保友
toshi koete hana no kagami to naru mochi wa kabi kakaru o ya kumoru to iu ran hoyû 1666
 year passing blossoms' mirror becoming sweetrice-cake-as-for molds hey! clouds-as say

*The mirror mochi we made last year blooms in the new:
 Mold has formed, or, should we say aloud, "It clouds?"*

This wit alludes to both the practice of taboo language over the New Year season (lucky words replaced many ordinary ones) and the conceit of blossoms as clouds and vice-versa. This echoes Jien's poem with clouds *vs* mist but having started the New Year and Spring, the haze, a given, is dropped for cloudiness versus blossoms. Still, the way the question is

posed alludes to Motokata's waka, which started the "Is it this, or is it that?" approach to year-change ambiguities and contradictions. But to return to the chronology, not long after the *Cake vs Wine Song Match*, we find the *liveliest* – or *sassiest?* – of all the take-offs. It is link-verse master Sôchô's first *Journal* entry in 1524. His *kyôka* (新玉のはつもとひきりーとせに こぞとやいはん小沙弥とやいはん *aratama no hatsumotoi kiri hitotose ni kozo to ya iwan koshami to ya iwan*) borrows Motokata's language to haze someone begging admission to the temple! The last two lines are, in H. Mack Horton's fine translation, "should we call him last year's scamp, / or should we call him this year's novice?" (*The Journal of Sôchô*). In the original, the last year and the scamp are punderfully one, while the new year and novice are punfully close. And, now we are ready for what must be the best of all the take-offs. It comes not from a stand-alone poem but an anthology of stories, Anraku Sakuden's *Laughs to Banish Sleep* (1623). It is #202 of 360 *kyôka*, or *near-kyôka* in the 1623 *Seisuisho* selected for the reference volume of *Broadview* attributed to 古老の人, an old person of long ago. Lacking a copy of the book, your translator wrote H. Mack Horton, who translated twenty-eight of the 1000-odd stories in 醒睡笑 *Seisuisho* as *Laughs to Banish Sleep*, for the framing, which he was kind enough to provide:

... the poem appears in an anecdote under *jôgo*, "heavy drinker." It's framed in a story about how when the solar New Year falls during the lunar old year it's celebratory, so the domestics are given a treat. Each person gets one rice bowl filled with *sake*, but an old man takes two. He is challenged to defend his effrontery, and he answers with the KKS poem that in this year the new year has come before the old one is out – so are we to call it "this year" or "last year?" It happens that *iiwan* "rice bowl" is a near-homophone of *iwan*, "call." So set up, the original might be heard to mean something like "This may be one year, but the old one calls for a bowl and the new one calls for a bowl [so I was just being cautious]!" Everybody laughed. (personal correspondence, with some changes and an overly bold bracketed addition.)

Bowls were commonly filled and quaffed after meals by the well-off at the time *Laughs* was written. Half a century earlier, Luis Frois and other Occidental visitors were disgusted by the practice (see items #6-32, -36 in *Topsy-turvy* 1585). If you try it you may find that *sake* tastes better sipped from the shell of a just-eaten crab than red wine or beer does. Who knows *why* that should be, but that is the way it is. But, let me note one technical thing about the pun in the original (which *Broadview* gives as 年のうちに春はきにけりーとせを去年とやいひわんことしとやいひわん). The *Kokinshû* original is *iwamu* not *iwan*. The twice-repeated *iwan*=>*iiwan* pun, which is the only thing in the *kyôka* that phonetically differentiates it from Motokata's poem, had to await the shift in writing (and, possibly, pronunciation) of the conjugation. *Iwamu* could not have been punned into

iiwan a *rice-bowl* (for whatever reason, nouns ending in “n” changed from “mu” in writing before the verbs did, so *iwamu* vs. *iiwamu* would have been unlikely) The pun, in retrospect seems a natural, but despite the apparent usage of modern spelling by some (Sôchô, above), usually, classic poems are left in their original spelling. Anraku Sakuden, or whomever he ripped off (he reminds me of Sufi story-tellers: anything is fair game), did not come upon that pun easily. Be that as it may, the scene, with the use of wit to rationalize a bit, is so perfect one hates to imagine it did not really happen. If ever there was a good place to invoke a *ben trovato*, this is it.

The enormous number of take-offs sown by this *waka* much reviled by humorless moderns speaks in its honor; but one can understand how those who *hate* it could take the same for proof of how much *harm* it has done! Despite Shiki’s rude remarks, *haikai* poets, including young Bashô (1644-94), greatly enjoyed the contradictions, which may seem artificial but actually come from the nature of nature (Does the earth not keep growing colder after the sun turns around?). Scores of examples of *their* calendrical play are in my book *The Fifth Season* (2007), the title of which reflects the fact that the New Year in multi-volume haiku almanacs had a volume to itself as the *other* four seasons do.

年の内に春は来にけりいらぬ世話 一茶 文化十三
toshi-no-uchi ni haru wa kinikeri iranu sewa issa 1816
 year-inside=house, spring’s done come: unneeded help

<i>Thanks but no thanks</i>	<i>There is a season</i>	<i>Early Spring</i>
<i>Spring, go home!</i>	<i>Do-goody Spring,</i>	<i>Hold your horses!</i>
<i>Old man Winter doesn’t</i>	<i>must you barge right into</i>	<i>the Winter and I do not</i>
<i>need your help.</i>	<i>Winter’s house!</i>	<i>need your help.</i>

This is no *kyôka*. But, you could call it a *kyôku*, or haiku-length equivalent. No poem succeeds in tying the premature Spring to real emotion, until this, by Issa, who took the first 13 syllabets directly from Motokata’s in/famous *waka*. His last 5, *iranu sewa*, a rude colloquialism for “unneeded help,” bring to life the puns on the “inside” (*uchi*) of the year as a *house* and the “year” (*toshi*) as an *elder*. Issa was not the first to use those puns, but his *ku* trumps his predecessors’ *because it has feeling*. We do not always *want* the winter to be over any more than we always want to jump out of bed at dawn. Hibernating can be good when you are troubled; spring thaws out things better left frozen. As a *waka* by Gyôson (1055-1135) put it “*When spring comes / my iced-up sleeves / melt down / and serve only / to lodge the moon.*” (*haru kureba sode no kôri mo tokenikeri morikuru tsuki no yadori bakari ni* sks #1439). Such a lachrymose *waka* might be considered a *kyôka*, but only Issa’s colloquialism manages to make it real.

三すぢまで山のひたひに春がすみ かゝるところへ出づる朝日奈 真顔
san suji made yama no hitai ni harugasumi kakaru tokoro e izuru asahina magao d.1829
 three lines/sinews-until mountain's brow-on spring-mist sets place-to/while appear morning-sun

春 An Asahina New Year 春

*At the moment three lines of spring haze form on its brow
 The mountain, smiles to greet the rising morning sun*

*~~~~~
 Just when spring haze has drawn three lines that crown
 The brow of a hill in Asahina – up comes that Sun!*

春, the character for Spring, also means the New Year of which haze is a prime symbol. “Smiling,” not in the original, but common conceit for Japanese mountains in the spring, wrinkles a brow. Lines resembling *three* 三 and the *sun* 日 are found in the character. Mountain 山 is not in it, except vaguely in a more triangular ancient form. New Year’s Day is sometimes called the “*start of three*,” referring to the new/first *day, month* and *year*. The “morning sun,” 朝日 *asahi*, puns into a toponym, Asahina 朝比奈. The *hi* 比 in the middle of the name is not the *hi* for sun but would sound the same and the additional character 奈 *na* at the end clinches it. Both readings take liberty with the syntax. The original relational flow (not order) of this ‘Japanese style’ poem is “The Asahina = morning-sun coming out right at the point when three lines of spring haze have settled on the brow of the mountain.”(岩波古典の「川柳狂歌集」の狂歌解説の中). Re-constructing a character in itself seems suitable for this Day of Beginning.

たはこのむうちより 春は来にけらし 烟も霞む はなのさき哉 正長 古今夷曲集
tabako nomu uchi yori haru wa kinikerashi kemuri mo kasumu hana no saki kana shôchô?
 tobacco smoking within-from spring-as-for comes!/?/: smoke even mists nose (=blossoms)-before!

♪ Before the bloom (tobacco fills the room) ♪

*Spring came, when I was taking a smoke – And the proof?
 Behold the haze that hangs thick as pudding from my nose!*

This is from the watershed *kyôka* anthology, *Kokin Ikyoku-shû*, or *Old-now Savage Songs* (1666). *Haikai* link-verse of this time was full of tobacco smoke in place of spring haze so the poet really had to work this to be novel. It starts with a take-off on *Spring-within-the-year*, punning “within the *house*” plays on the proverbial haze and ends with punning “nose-tip” = *hana-no-saki* = “blossoms-before.” (♪ *The 740-page Monster* has a whole two-page chapter for tobacco, including a word about health effects!)

めでたいといへはめでたいといふこそ 口真ねこまね正月の礼 宜齊 古今 同
medetai to ieba medetai to iu koso kuchi-maneko ma-neshôgatsu no rei gisai 1666
 joyful/lucky say-if joyful/lucky say espec. mimicker realsleepng(=mimic) ny greetings

*Happy New Year! Say it, & it is a Happy New Year, indeed,
 To Spend this Day in bed, parroting greetings half-asleep!*

Your translator once credited Issa with bringing the word *ne-shôgatsu*, or, the “sleeping New Year’s Day” into *haikai*. Considering the existence (and date) of this *kyôka*, that is highly unlikely.

祝歌 箒たて 草履へ灸をすゆるとも 千秋万歳 われは長尻 蜀山人
hōki tatete zōri e kyū o suyuru to mo senshū-banzei ware wa nagajiri shokusanjin
 broom+acc stand, sandal-to moxa+acc burn even 1000-falls-10000years I-as-4 long-butt

♪ One More to Celebrate ♪

*Though the moxa
 burns my sandal soles and
 brooms stand high,*

*Burn my old soles
 and rake me over the coals,
 1000 falls are good!*

*A thousand falls will pass
 before I’ll say good-bye!*

*Stand a broom upon its butt
 I’m staying put: Understood?*

~~~~~

Banzei! I’m Still Here!

*Burn that moxa on my sandal soles, stand up that old broom –  
 ‘A Thousand Falls!’ – I’ll be damned if I leave the room at all!*

A “thousand autumns ten-thousand years.” A New Year’s wish for a long life. *Banzei* is *banzai* but sounds more brazen, which fits this poem. The broom and moxa are obvious and magical charms to get a visitor to move on. In a land where even a hayseed like Issa often expressed guilt for living too long, it is refreshing to hear a samurai choose life!

門松・元旦は冥土の旅の一里塚 めでたくもありめでたくもなし 一休  
*kadomatsu 又 gantan wa meido no tabi no ichirizuka medetaku mo ari medetaku mo nashi ikkyū*  
 gatepine/s (or newyear’s-morn)-as-for hades/purgatory’s travel’s 1-mile-mound: lucky are & lucky are-not

*What are gate-pines  
 But milestones on the Way  
 to the Netherworld?*

*Lucky for trav’lers, perhaps  
 but unlucky if you’d stay.*

*What’s the First Day,  
 but a milestone on the way  
 to the world below?*

*A new year is propitious  
 And very much not so!*

As Japanese aged collectively on the New Year (see *The Fifth Season*: 2007), it was the time for bitter-sweet reflection on aging. Only a Zen iconoclast like Ikkyû could take an evergreen symbol of longevity, the beautiful Gate-pine, generally a pair of black (male) and red (female) trident pine branches standing in green bamboo vases outside the gate, and turn it into a marker of mortality, but what can one expect from a man said to walk around with a skull on New Year's Day! The "travelers" and "if you stay" are added. The gate-pine variant is far better known than the *First Day* one. It was a very well-known *kyôka*-style *dôka*, or religious poem. The idea of having mixed emotions about a beloved calendrical happening went back at least to Ariwara no Narihira's poem in the Tales of Ise (c.1000):

おほかたは月をもめでじこれぞこのつもれば人のおいとなるもの 伊勢八八  
*ôkata wa tsuki o mo medeji kore zo kono tsumoreba hito no oi to naru mono*  
 mostly moon+acc even delight-not this+emp these pile-when person's/s' age(=burden) becomes+

*For the most part, even full moons do not delight me –  
 They pile up on us, they do, and, soon, we are buried!*

To atone for the lost pun on *age* 老=*oi* as a *burden* =負 that makes the poem a near *kyôka*, *old* was changed to *buried* to create, together with *pile up*, an allegory and regain some wit. To return to Ikkyû's marker, the best mad poem on Gate-pines is not a *kyôka* but a *kyôku* by a top 17c Teimon school haikai-master:

春立やにほんめでたきかどの松 徳元  
*haru tatsu ya nihon medetaki kado no matsu tokugen 1559-1647*  
 spring arrives=stands!/: two=Nihon(Japan)=>legs? joyous gate-pines

*Spring stands on  
 its own two legs, gate-pines:  
 Nippon is fine!*

The puns in this, the most famous gate-pine *ku*, do not English. The "*nihon*," or, *two*, with the counter *hon/bon/pon*, signifying long things such as these decorations, sounds like the name of the nation, and this, together with the fact that the verb used for *the coming* of the season, also means *to stand*, subtly turns the long upright decorations into legs: *the Spring = infant Year stands up, hurrah!* It may well be the most cheerful poem ever written in Japanese. And, the below is the final word on Ikkyû's poem. It trumps it with the perfect metaphor for complex feelings.

又ひとつ年はよるとも玉手箱あけてうれしき今朝のはつ春 もとの木網 徳和一万  
*mata hitotsu toshi wa yoru to mo tamatebako akete ureshiki kesa no hatsu haru moto no mokuami*  
 again one year-as-for approaches yet gem-hand-box opening happy this morn's first spring 1785

*Another one! A new year comes to make us older yet  
We delight to open up that legendary treasure chest!*

The “treasure chest” refers to one opened as a last resort by Japan’s Rip Van Winkle, Urashima Tarô, after the fisherman, returning from the Sea Dragon’s Palace, found everyone he knew long dead and grew lonely. I will not give away the end of the tale – but, in this context, perhaps you can guess. Unfortunately, *Pandora’s box* will not do for even a mad translation as it lacks the focus on *aging*. The poet Mokuami’s wife Chie no Naishi, Little Ignoramus, the most popular woman in Tenmei *kyôka*, had the next poem in the *Tokuwa Kago Kyôkashû* (1785):

通りますと岩戸の関のこなたより春へふみ出すけさの日の足 智恵内子  
*tôrimasu to iwato no seki no konata yori haru e fumidasu kesa no hi no ashi*  
 “passing-will/am!” and/with, cavern-gate’s checkpoint’s beyond from  
 spring-into stepping-put/starts this-morning’s sun’s/sunny legs/feet

*From beyond the Cavern’s checkpoint gate, “I’m coming through!”  
 As her beaming legs pass into Spring, I hear the Sun – do you?*

~~~~~  
*“Coming through!” From without the cavern’s checkpoint gate
 The Sun on beaming legs passes into Spring – immaculate!*

The cave, of course, echoes the primeval, or mythic coming out of the Sun Goddess. What makes Little Ignoramus’s poem a breath of fresh air in the original is the Sun/Day shouting out as people passing through checkpoints were supposed to. The sound of announcing oneself in a crisp, clear voice ending on the definitive conjugation of a Japanese verb *must be heard to be appreciated*. Sun-beams, like distant rain falling from clouds, are idiomatically “*ashi*=legs;” and what is idiomatic does not seem idiotic, which is to say anthropomorphic, as is the case in translation. The original has no “*I hear the Sun – do you?*” but with so much lost in translation, *something* had to be done. The second reading, from the 740-page Monster, for better or worse, added one big word to try to capture the indescribable smart feeling. All who have read much Japanese poetry know of the following poem by Yomo no Akara, but, *in Japanese*, if your translator is not mistaken, Little Ignoramus’ “*Coming through!*” poem is, in its own way, just as good if not better.

生酔の礼者を見れば大道をよこすぢかひに春は来にけり 蜀山人
namayoi no reisha o mireba ômichi o yokosujikai ni haru wa kinikeri shokusanjin
 raw-drunk caller+acc see-if/when big-road+acc sidewise cross/zigzagging spring-as-for comes!

*Heading this way, a drunk New Year caller, zig-zagging
 up the boulevard I see – Here comes the Spring!*

Greeting cards are standard today, but once people personally conveyed their thanks for help rendered in the previous year and offer their best wishes for the New one. They also exchanged toasts with Tosozake, a special medical rice wine. Brownas and Thwaite did a good job on this famous *kyôka*, one of a mere four they deigned to include in their *Penguin Book of Japanese Verse*. “A BLIND DRUNK / New Year Caller / I see: spring / Coming, lurching / Across the street.” This, too, is possible:

*To see our drunken New Year callers weaving up the street
That Spring manages to come at all is quite the feat!*

Your translator thinks Akara saw a person in the distance and assumed he was coming *his* way, but was surprised to see him in such good spirits that he could not help calling on others as he came – but, *who knows!*

掛こひの夜あけにをもき革財布かつぎし肩もはるは来にけり 飯盛
kakegoi no yoake ni omoki kawa saifu katsugishi kata mo haru wa kinikeri
dunner's day-break-at heavy leather purse/bag carrying shoulder's spring-as-for came

*The debt-collector, his leather bag heavy as New Year's day breaks.
In his shoulders, he too feels the swelling that Spring's coming makes.*

The pivotal homophone, *haru*, first *swelling*, then *spring* (New Year), is lost in translation, but we'll keep the poem as a novelty among novelties. Not only poems by commoners but by samurai thought of dunners as devils. But Meshimori, an inn-keeper, had debts to collect. With many poor samurai to collect from, a dunner never knew when one would crack, and whip out his sword. The poem deserves to be not just *as* famous, but *more* famous than the much-translated *Spring-zig-zagging-up-the-street*.

きのふまで丸裸なる山ひめも 霞のきぬをきそ初せり 方碩 銀葉夷歌集
kinô made maruhadaka naru yamahime mo kasumi no kinu o kisosome seri hôseki 1679
yesterday-until round-naked is mountain-princess also mist's silk/dress+acc wear-starts

*Even the princess of the mountain, buck-naked yesterday,
Has put on her misty robes, the year's first dress – Hooray!*

Calling the princess *buck-naked* is funny in itself. While many poets make a big deal of Fuji's snow, few treat the mountains closer to hills in actual size near Kyôto that are identified with Princess Sao, so one might indeed wonder what she wore before the mist of spring, in the relatively dry and clear Japanese winter. The “*hooray!*” was added not just for the rhyme but to convey the joy of *first-dress*, one of the most significant *Firsts* of the New Year. Here is a *surimono kyôka* take on the rite:

佐保姫の衣の浦に春たちて かすみの袖をぬふ沖の舟 南枝春告 1799
 saohime no koromo no ura ni haru tachite kasumi no sode o nuu oki no fune nanshi no harutsugu
 sao princess's clothing's reverse/lining's spring arrives/cutting misty sleeve+acc sewing offshore-boat

*Spring comes to Princess Sao's Robe-within Bay to cut the fabric for
 Her sleeves of mist loosely sewn by the tacking boats offshore.*

~~~~~  
*As the New Year arrives / at the Bay of Koromo, / Saohime, goddess of spring,  
 wears robes woven with mist / covering boats in the offing. – trans. carpenter*

*Surimono* were beautiful prints accompanied by one or more – three to four being average – *kyōka*, generally commissioned by a *kyōka* master and presented to his or her clients for New Year's. Consequently, most of the themes pertain to that season. The Hokusai print from *An Array of Beauties for the Year of the Sheep* with the above *kyōka* (in Carpenter et al.: “*Reading Surimono*” 2008) shows a girl pulling taut a piece of red tie-dyed fabric held between her delicate little mouth and tiny fingers while her free hand pinches or pins a crease. Carpenter's added description, “goddess of spring” creates something rare in Japanese-English translation, a rhyme. There are a handful of fabric and sewing-related words worked into the original, with the wittiest making boat/s *sew* (*nuu*). My “tacking” clarifies that seemingly overlooked metaphor. As, Carpenter improves the poem by uniting the Goddess with her Spring, an ideal translation might start with his, and simply replace “covering” with “tacked by.”

かゆ杖にふりむく妹が身ハよれて糸の柳の腰にめも付く 浅草庵  
 kayuzue ni furimuku imo ga mi wa yorete ito no yanagi no koshi ni me mo tsuku asakusa an  
 gruel-stck-to turnng-faces girl's body-as4 twist/braiding thread-wllw-hip/waist-to buds=eyes attach

*Turning to face the gruel stick the girl's lithe body twists  
 And all our eyes are drawn to the willow's budding hips.*

~~~~~  
*Turning to face the gruel stick, how the nubile maiden's body twists,
 while eyes by strands are drawn toward pussy willow buds & hips!*

Carpenter's translation – “*During 'gruel-stick' rites, a young girl looks back as she twists and turns, with hips as slender as boughs of budding willow*” – is fine except for making “rite” explicit; but his *explanation* was invaluable, for identifying the woman depicted (not being whacked) was *a samurai wife* by her hat, which matters because buttocks were wacked to produce *boys*, something particularly important to samurai, and that connects the poem and picture. *Gruel* usually means the Seventh Day seven greens/herbs, but this takes place on the so-called “Small New Year” or “Woman's New Year (*meshōgatsu*)” on the Fifteenth Day, or, full-moon. The *hips* are where willow limbs bend over and *twisting*=*yoru* becomes *braiding* because slender pendulant limbs are called *threads* in Japanese; but what makes the poem worthy is not that simple confluence

of terms, but the artless pun on “*me* め” meaning “*bud* 芽” or “*eyes* 目” in the last *ku*. All I could do was make the *willow* a *pussy*. Where Carpenter wrote of “playfully tapping women’s buttocks with sticks of wood used to stoke the fire heating *azuki*-bean gruel”, I imagined *stirring* said gruel (with the lunar part of old mirror *mochi* rice-cake or samurai armor-*mochi*) with the same. We were *both* right. The stick, looks burnt on one end (shaved to light the fire?) but stirs the pot with the other. Since a haiku mentions the scent of citron “known by” a woman’s behind (粥杖や柚の香にうしろ(後?) 知られたり 綾足 *kayuzue ya yuzu no ka ni ushiro* (ato?)*shiraretari* ryôsoke? rinsoku? 18c? 講談社大歳時記ですが、「柚」が「袖」と誤字! 又「うしろ」だと七に珍し字余り、それも後の読み違いから?), it would seem that was the end used for whacking. Another haiku, also probably predating the *kyôka*, sums up beautifully,

粥杖に逃ぐるふりしてうたれけり 三敲
kayuzue ni niguru furi shite utarekeri sankyô?
 gruelstick-from fleeing simulate-doing beaten+emphatic

A woman hit
 while *pretending* to flee
 the gruel stick!”

In translation, the following *kyôka* by Getsudôken loses a fine Tom Swifty (*keenly*=*tsukuz(ts)uku* =*strike*), but it is a great example of what can only be a *kyôka*. Cooked sweet-rice is pounded into *mochi*, a smooth white, rubbery substance that dries hard but rapidly balloons when toasted usually called “cake” for lack of a better word. It is touching to watch an old couple pound *mochi* together – the man swinging the long-headed unstable mallet (pestle is not quite right, neither the, or “pole,” in the original) as the woman moves the huge glob of rice about to keep it from sticking.

春を待餅をつく／＼とおもふにも臼と棹 sic? とはとゝかゝのごと 月洞軒
haru o matsu mochi o tsukuzuku to omou ni mo usu to sao(kine?) to wa toto kaka no goto
 spring=swell+acc waiting ricecake+acc pound-x2=keenly thinkng even mortr&pstle-as4 dad-mom resemble

正月の餅つくを見てよめる
 Composed upon seeing mochi pounded on the New Year.

*Pounding sweet-rice to prime the Spring pounds it into me:
 The mortar and the pestle are ma and pa, it has to be!*

♪ A *ben trovato*? Something that ought to be true, even if it is made-up. Italian. From the saying “*se è non vero, è ben trovato*” or, “while not true, it is well invented.”

♪ Over 90% – maybe 99% – of *kyôka* translated to date are in *surimono*, but *The Monster* was almost finished before your translator knew that. Why? Because they were in art books (usually catalogs) and did not find their way to correspondents in Japanese literature departments who read specialized reviews that often fail to catch what is published outside of the usual presses. The high price of these books also keeps them all but art students and wealthy collectors.

Mad Seasons: *a Spring with Country Matters*

棹姫の裳裾吹き返し やわらかな 景色をそそと見する春風 貞徳 貞徳百首狂歌

sao-hime no suso fukikaeshi yawarakana keshiki o soso to misuru harukaze teitoku 17c

sao princess's skirt blowing-back soft scenery+acc. gently:quim show/s spring-wind/s

♪ *Mons Vernâlis* ♪

*How soft a scene
above her foothills pleasing
the eye that flirts
as the spring breeze softly
lifts sao hime's misty skirts*

♪ *Mt. Tenderest* ♪

*So, so lovingly
the warm winds of spring
lift the misty skirt
of Princess Sao to show
the tender heart of earth.*

Sao Hime, Princess of Spring of newly verdant hills and vales, wearing the mist and adorned with flowers . . . No flowers are mentioned but this poem from Teitoku's *Hundred Kyôka* is lyrical enough to be mad in Japan where reverie is rare. Both readings are slightly off. It might more justifiably be titled *Ventus Adventis* or *The Coming of the Wind*, for every word modifies the protagonist bringing up the tail: "*Blowing back the hem of Princess Sao's robe to gently reveal a soft scene, the Spring Wind.*" But how do we stay focused on the Wind, rather than what *he* shows us in this verbal *shunga*, or spring(erotic)-print when English poesy wants to make a scene rather than modify the wind?

*What a soft country, the scenery above her knees –
Sao-hime's skirts lifted gently by the April breeze!*

In the original, Sao's sex lies where Issa would put his *shimijimi*=extremely (spiteful)=silverfish, in an *adverb*, *soso*, or *gently*, a fine old word for what the Bard called *country matters*. Prefaced with the accusative marker for the scenery (*keshiki*), it becomes the more polite *o-soso*, preferred for the same in Teitoku's Kyôto! Compare this gentle eroticism with the rudely described buck-naked princess in the New Year chapter and you will have in two poems the high road and the low road to *kyôka*.

And speaking of the latter road, Issa the *haikai*-master often took it.

GrAsS hut airs

*What wind I break
into sweet plum's bouquet!
Spring has finally come
to this old fart.*

梅が香に御ならの匂ひこき交せて 草の庵も春辺なりけり 一茶
 ume ga ka ni onara no nioi kokimazete kusa no iori mo harube narikeri issa
 (plum scent in hon.fart's smell mixing grass=stinky hut too spring=swollen is!)

When Spring came, commoners eating gas-inducing *daikon* pickles and other salted greens that outlasted winter were full of what Méxicans might call *frijoles*. Issa, using the double-verb *koki-mazete* in a number of *haiku*, confesses (or boasts?) to mixing his stink with the scent of the plum. Married for the first time at age 52, his young wife was pregnant, so it is likely the flowering plum is her, with breasts full of milk. *Plum* is written 梅. Can you see the 母 *mother* in it, tits and all? While those tits also look like the little plums that resemble the full nipples of a nursing woman, in Japanese, the plum by itself, like the cherry, implies the bloom, not fruit. The above reading, a paraverse rather than translation because of the blatant addition of “old fart,” uses “bouquet” to convey that. Issa’s spring was in his fall. A usage of *koki-mazete* in *waka* he would have known mixes cherry blossoms and green willow to bring a trope associated with colored leaves, a Chinese robe, or *brocade*, into the spring. Reading Joyce on the toilet (who can take him more than a poop at a time?), Professor *Bloom* inspired another translation picking up on *harube* (*spring=harube=swell*):

*The scent of plum
 in bloom and smelly farts
 mix together . . .*

*How my old grass hut
 swells with the spring!*

Issa’s original, like most *kyôka*, including traditional poetic language, lies between the two readings. He is feeling both his age and his oats. So, now, we have seen the Beauty and the beast. Here comes the Nightingale:

心から花のしづくにそぼちつつうくひずとのみ鳥のなくらむ 藤原としゆき
 kokoro kara hana no shizuku ni sobochi tsutsu uku hizu to nomi tori no naku ran toshiyuki 905
 heart-from blossom's drops-by drenched-while troubled/excited=warb=dry-not=ler only bird cries!

*Willfully he rips
 thru the blossoms, then, drenched
 by their nectar*

*Why does our Thrush Hector cry?
 Because his feathers will not dry!*

*Flying from tree to
 tree, with wingborn wind, he
 knocks off blossoms*

*All the while crying up a storm,
 He blames others for the deed!*

treelimbtip-traveling own wing-wind-in/from scatter blossms+acc who blaming here-there cries!

kozutaeba onoga hakaze ni chiru hana o tare ni ôsete kokora nakuran monk sosei 905
 こづたへばおのがはかせにちる花をたれにおほせてこころなくらむ そせい

In case you wonder what happened to the promised *Nightingale* – well, it died with Peking. Nowadays, most translators call the *uguisu* that, depending on the poem, brings the spring to the flowering trees or comes to despoil them, a *bush warbler* or a *thrush*. The first poem, a wordplay 物名 (lit. *thing-name*) poem from bk 10 of *Kokinshû*, breaks *uguisu* into two words, *uku hizu*, where *uku* means “feeling blue” and *hizu* “not to dry.” It works best as a paper pun – that is, visually – as the reader used to supply or leave blank the *nigori*, or muddy-marks settling the pronunciation. Yet, the muddy marks for the s => z sound *are* supplied in most renderings of this poem, probably because otherwise the *uku+hizu* reading might well be missed, but once the marks are there, the reading is not optional so there was either a hick *uguizu* pronunciation of the bird or said muddy-marks were explained away as water-drops! The fancy split-word pun and ridiculous but not exceptionally vulgar content makes this *Kokinshû* “word-play” an excellent example of what would come to be called a *kyôka*. Hector and rhyme only made up for half of the loss in translation. The second poem (originally captioned *uguisu*) from the same anthology does not engage in such clever wordplay, but shares something with conceptual *kyôka*. With such wacky *waka* already out there, it was hard for *kyôka* to find a novel purchase. *Haikai* that could jump ship for the final 7-7 and add still add something to that wit: *brevity*.

鶯の羽風や花を味かたうち 茂次 鷹つくば
uguisu no hakaze ya hana o mikata-uchi moji 1642
 (nightingale[bush-warbler]’s wing-breeze: blossom[acc.]ally-shot)

<i>blown away</i>	<i>acceptable casualties</i>
<i>wind from the wings</i>	<i>blossoms dropped</i>
<i>of the warbler! blossoms</i>	<i>by friendly fire: wind from</i>
<i>felled by friendlies</i>	<i>nightingale’s wing</i>

Kyôka, the same length as other *waka* and intended to be read as a stand-alone, could not do that. But it had to do *something*.

巢をは跡に残し出たる 谷川の魚にはけつゝ うくひなくなり 雄長老
su o ba ato ni nokoshi idetaru tanikawa no sakana ni haketsutsu ukui nakunari yûchôrô
 nest+emph behind leaving depart valley-river’s fish-divulge-while ugui dies/sings

*Ale with tears flow side by side as nighting swim and cry,
 Spilling out their guts, until, like that little bird, they die.*

Here is what the first-man of 16c *kyôka*, Yûchôrô came up with when he crossed a fish called *ugui*, said to cry/sing, with the song of the bird *uguisu*. The *ale+nighting* mimics the bassackwards split-name, though the reason

the *ugui* sings=cries=dies (*nakunari*) is that it leaves its (mountain brook) nest, or *su*, behind to address other fish in the vale. The reading reaches back to the old translation of *uguisu* to find a substitute for the *nest-as-su* pun in the sacrificial concept of the nightingale. Exceedingly creative and untranslatable, the poem does things only Tenmei *kyôka* are supposed to do, but is only a stylistic gloss, dead in translation. Yûchôrô's 17c reincarnation, Getsudôken also pulled out all the stops:

初声はせんずりこゑかしはがれて内所の庭にきなく鶯 黒田月洞軒大団 c1700
hatsu koe wa senzuri koe ka shiwagarete naisho no niwa ni ki naku uguisu getsudôken
 first-voice-as-4 masturbate voice? wrinkling/husky inner garden-in coming sing cuckoo

*Is that not the voice of one lost in self-pleasure? The first thrush
 Singing in our garden shade . . . gurgles so to make us blush!*

~~~~~  
*Is the first song of that warbler not the voice of jacking off?  
 What strange gurgling comes from a corner of our bosque!*

The *uguisu* is no mockingbird and lacks even the house wren's variety. It just repeats its *hokekkyô* sutra over and over. Still, the first calls involve much initial sucking (for good imitation learn to whistle *in* as well as out) and seem particularly liquid, perhaps because it wavers, as if the throat is not yet grooved. The translator, fortunate enough to hear it year after year, prefers that warm-up with its slight variation and more complex grain to the later calls which seem smooth and mechanical. The poet is to be commended for listening so carefully and being honest about what he heard, that confirms the nature of his mind's ear, suspected already because of the extraordinary number of erotic *kyôka* in his Big Fan 大団 collection. The poem itself is pretty poor, but it tells us a lot about *kyôka*.

ほそ／＼と鳴鶯の初音には朝とうまるも及はさりけり 行安 古今夷曲集  
*hosoboso to naku uguisu no hatsune ni wa asa to umaru mo oyobazarikeri kôan 1666*  
 finely/thinly sings warbler's first-sound-in-as-for morning-with-born even matches-not!

*The first songs of our Uguisu are so delicate a thing  
 Confucius sounds crude with 'Born in the morning ~'*

..  
 The delicacy of the wavering beauty of the first voice of the *uguisu* is compared to the proverbial transience of the Morning Glory (in a well-known saying of Confucius). While Getsudôken was perceptive to catch the erotic quality, the slight wavering liquidity is *not* as husky, or rough as he made it out to be and this slightly earlier *kyôka*, is by far the better observation. Readers who love the way Hank Williams' voice slips back and forth on the edge of a note in the Emmett Miller-style semi-yodel part of the *Love-sick Blues* refrain will appreciate this. Others may not.

~~~~~  
 上巳 我むねは 今日 はな焼きそ 若草の餅もこもれり酒もこもれり 孝雄 17c?
waga mune wa kyô wa na yakiso wakakusa no mochi mo komoreri sake mo komoreri yoshio 信海狂歌集
 my breast-as-4 today-as-4 burn-not! young-grass-mochi (sweet-rice-cake) hidden, sake, too, hidden

Girl's Day

*My heart burn not, not today, when we have a rendezvous
 w/ soft sweet cakes of rice, grass-green, & wine for dew!*

~~~~~  
 Heart burn not today, we need this space to lay away  
 Mochi fragrant as spring grass & cool rivers of sake!

~~~~~  
 むさし(かすが)のはけふはなやきそわかくさのつまもこもれり我もこもれり 伊勢 12
musashi/kasuga-no wa kyô wa na yakiso wakakusa no tsuma mo komoreri ware mo komoreri tale of ise c.900
 musashi/kasuga moor-as-4 today-as-4 burn-not young-grass-spouse hidden I too hidden + 占今 #17

~~~~~  
 Girl's Day, or the Doll Festival, takes place on the third day of the third month. That would be between the ume, plum (or Japanese apricot) bloom and the cherry, when the peach blossomed. Usually, wine and the glutinous, pounded cooked rice called *mochi* – translated as “cake” for lack of a word: the texture is far from cake – do not mix. Drinkers drink and teetotalers eat *mochi*. But girl day was an exception. It would seem the combination of sweet food and drink caused heartburn for some! This *kyôka*, a take-off on a *Tale of Ise* poem is typical for turning a sexy original – absconding lovers hiding in a field face the threat of being burnt out (see page 98 for the translation) – into food. If translating food were not painful – it is practically meaningless without pictures and scent samples – we might have a whole chapter on it. The *kyôka* is atypical, however, for being the rare *kyôka* utterly boring by itself, while hilarious, a masterpiece, if read *with knowledge of the original*. They are more similar in the Japanese as the romanizations show. 蛇足：餅もツマですね。

..

~~~~~  
 Now, one more Spring bird, noted not for *coming* but *leaving* in that season. The *kaeri-kari*, or geese abandoning the flowers, meaning blooming cherries, for home on the continent.

~~~~~  
 帰る雁にちがふ雲路のつばくらめこまかにこれや書ける玉づさ 西行  
*kaeru kari ni chigau kumoji no tsubakurame komaka ni kore ya kakeru tamazusa*  
 returning geese-with differng cloud-road's swallow/s finely/detailed this+emph writing letter

*On cloud-paths in-bound while the Anserine's out, Swallows near,  
 Their letters too damn fine to read, until they're almost here!*

While “goose-swallow” is an old Chinese idiom for two (usually people or groups of people or messages) that pass one another coming and going, epistolary birds other than geese are so rare that this *waka* by Monk Saigyô (d.1190) reads like a *kyôka*. Your translator, with his failing eyesight, added the value-judgment, “too damn” to what was emphasized but not criticized in the original to make it madder yet.

かりかねの もみちにかけしたまつさをはなにつけてやもてかへるらむ 千載集 1188  
*karigane no momiji ni kakeshi tamatsusa o hana ni tsukete ya motekaeruramu* ng 番号外作者  
 geese's red-leaves=maple-in written gem-letter+acc blossom/nose-to putting!/: carrying return

*Red it was, as this epistle came in with the maple leaf;  
 And the anserine letter, writ in bloom? Sakura serif.*

The poet is not anonymous but the open source for the *waka* anthology, Nichibun, has yet to enter the names of all but the most famous poets (if you are a *waka*-lover with money, *please* pay them to hire a secretary to add names!), so it is *ng*, *not given*. No matter, by the time you see it in English, the poem is largely the translator's. The original ends in a pun on *blossoms*=*hana*=*nose* with a possibly snooty idiom (鼻につけて) no big loss in translation, but fine in the original which pushes the envelope on *goose-as-messenger* far enough to make a *kyôka*. With few homophones, compensatory high-frequency punning in English requires arcane words.

仙人も天狗も雲と見ちかへて梢をふむな三吉野の花 飯盛  
*sennin mo tengu mo kumo to michigaete kozue o fumu na miyoshino no hana*  
 sages & tengu too cloud mistaking tree-top+acc step-on-not! +hon+yoshino-blossoms

*Adepts and tengu wizards all, step not to thy doom!  
 A cloud may be a treetop when Yoshino is in bloom!*

..  
 Cherry blossoms on hills were conflated with clouds in countless *waka* and *haikai* (see ch.17 “Blossom Clouds, Cloud Blossoms” of *The Cherry Blossom Epiphany* (2007) “How to tell the clouds from the blossoms” in the Table of Contents). Old Taoist masters, or mountain sages, were said to retire up high peaks and pass their time on the clouds. Tengu, the long-nosed goblin identified with mountain wizards, may have originated from sightings of the proboscis monkey in ancient times. If this poem had been created in a *haikai* context, it would be hyperbolic praise of Yoshino's lush cherry blossoms. Issa, who camped out up there, has *ku* about sleeping on those clouds. Coming from a *kyôka* master (Yadoya no Meshimori), however, we know the intent was to poke fun at the overblown conceit. A better-known poem by Hezutsu Tôsaku (1726-89), one of seven *kyôka* in Steven D. Carter's *Traditional Japanese Poetry* reads, in his translation,

*yama no ha ni hana ja kumo ja to arasoi no naka e deru hi ya rachi o akebono.*  
 mountain's ridge blossoms are! clouds are! quarrel-into come sun settle+acc do=dawn

“Are they blossoms  
 or clouds on that mountain ridge?”  
 I fight with myself –  
 til the sun intervenes  
 to settle the argument!

sc trans.

Tôzaku's poem, captioned “Blossoms at Dawn” is, until the last word, the first half (*ake*) of which serves as a verb for an idiom meaning “decide matches” before concluding as *akebono*, dawn, a purely conceptual *kyôka*. A mad translation trying to keep it colloquial almost works:

“*They're blossoms!*” “*No, Clouds!*”  
 Up on that ridge – we fight until dawn  
 When the Sun steps in and settles it  
 One of me is wrong!

The difficulty of telling apart clouds and blossoms, as we have seen, is nothing new, but to debate oneself so ferociously an arbitrator is needed is.

花と見ばさすが情をかけましを 雲とて風のはらふなるべし 西行 山家集  
*hana to miba sasuga nasake o kakemashi o kumo tote kaze no harau-narubeshi saigyô 12c*  
 blossom-as see-when yep kindness does? “clouds (as-if2say)”wind blows/dissipates-ought

*A Dutiful Blast*

*Seeing blossoms,  
 how could the wind not  
 want to help!*  
*It is, after all, supposed to  
 clear away clouds, right?*

*An Ideal World*

*It would be nice  
 to have storm winds free  
 to clean our peaks  
 of those loitering clouds  
 yet let the blossoms be!*

立ちまがふ峯の雲をばはらふとも花を散らさぬ嵐なりせば 西行 同  
*tachimagau mine no kumo oba harau to mo hana o chirasanu arashi nariseba saigyô*  
 arise confuse peak's cloud+acc disperse-though blossoms scatter-not storm be-if!

Saigyô, famous lover of *sakura*, also could see things from the Wind's point of view. *Waka* asking the wind to blast view-blocking clouds or lay off blossoms were old hat. Combining them, as in the second poem, is new. Perhaps it should be with the plum+willow+cherry tree under *Fantasy!* Poets from the time of the *Manyôshû*, when cherry blossoms in poetry were still fresh, worried lest they come into bloom, stay so long enough to be enjoyed, or suffer wind or rain damage before being shared with others:

世の中にたへて桜(女)のなかりせば春(をとこ)の心はのどけからまし 業平(蜀山人)  
 yo no naka ni taete sakura (onna) no nakariseba haru (otoko) no kokoro wa nodokekaramashi  
 world-among completely/end cherries(women) not-if spring(males') minds/hearts placid (be) would

*If cherry trees  
 would only vanish  
 from the world  
 Our hearts might be  
 serene each spring!*

*If all women  
 would only vanish  
 from the world  
 Men's hearts might be  
 happy and serene.*

Ariwara no Narihira. KKS #84 (10c)

Kyôka by Shokusan 蜀山先生(19c)

Before explaining why cherry trees trouble people, or at least poets, and why the parody fits so well, let me give another pair of translations –

*If cherry blossoms  
 were to vanish completely  
 from this earth  
 The mind of spring would be  
 a study in serenity*

*If womankind  
 were to vanish completely  
 from this earth  
 The minds of men like me  
 might then know serenity*

Ariwara no Narihira. KKS waka #84

Kyôka by Shokusanjin 蜀山先生

As satire, like euphemism that in time becomes what it covers, often ends up taken for gospel and, itself, satirized or parodied, it is possible Narihira's *waka* while ostensibly sympathizing with the busy host of a blossom-viewing event, was *also* intended to roast generations of worry-wart poets by hyperbolizing. But Shokusanjin probably imagined that this famously handsome man, almost as promiscuous as his namesake in *The Tales of Ise*, like many men who conquer and leave one woman after another, blamed his itch on what he could not resist scratching. But, this may be unfair; Narihira did not author "his" romantic *Tales* (which include this poem); we do not know he was a lifelong Don Juan, only that he was handsome.

The early-17c *Fake Ise* 仁勢物語 nearly beat Shôkusanjin to the punch, changing *sakura*/cherry to 妻子 *wife+child/ren* and *spring* to *now*. When being on the wrong side of a political intrigue – or simply related to someone who was – got entire families exiled or broken up, nobles did worry and not just for their wives the *Fake Ise* parody may be the truth. But Narihira, say my respondents, was a *waka* poet. *His* blossoms are *blossoms*. The translator, no scholar, cannot argue; but that is all the more reason the *waka* and its *kyôka* parodies will stay right here in the chapter on Spring. Again, a *senryû* for comparison:



花やちるらんで女中をこわがらせ 柳多留 12  
 hana ya chiruran de jochû o kowagarase yanagidaru 1777  
 blossoms+emph fall+excl with(saying) maid/s+acc frighten

*“Blossoms, you know, end up falling” he says, scaring his servant.*

Blossom-as-woman is not woman-as-blossom and the poem is not a nice one, but the idea of a maid-servant made to fear a metaphor as an allegorical threat in this exceptionally translatable *senryû* borrowed from *Cherry Blossom Epiphany – the poetry & philosophy of a flowering tree* (2007) is irresistible. More *haikai* from that same book:

三春の役や忘るゝ遅ざくら 重頼 犬子 1633  
 sanshun no yaku ya wasururu osozakura shigeyori

*Spring's last act – someone forgets her role, a slow cherry!*

まつ人に一春まけよをそ櫻 宗祇 発句集  
 matsu hito ni hitoharu makeyo osozakura sôgi 1420-1502

*So how about an extra spring for all who wait, late cherry?*

花車牛のひけばや遅櫻 徳元 崑山集 1651  
 hanaguruma ushi no hikeba ya osozakura tokugen

*Going by ox cart, no wonder that they are late cherry blossoms!*

とてもならば師走に咲よ遅櫻 中好 洗濯物  
 totemo naraba shiwasu ni sakeyo osozakura chûkô? 1666

*Then why not just wait for New Year's Eve – late cherry!*

花も幾世春をくらさん遅櫻 宗祇 発句集  
 hana mo ikuyo haru okurasan osozakura sôgi 1420-1502

would blossoms, too  
 forever keep their spring,  
 my late-cherries?

late cherries, too  
 how many generations tried  
 to slow the spring?

With *haikai* full of comic laments for the leaving Spring, how could mad poets outdo that? Here is one way, by challenging the term itself!

暮れ行くといへばどふやらよけれどもなにもくれずにげて行春 鶯 摺江  
 kure yuku to ieba dôyara yokeredomo nani mo kurezu nigete yuku haru uguisu no surie  
 dusking as call-it someway OK-but nothing giving fleeing goes spring 徳和 1785

*To call this time “the twilight of the Spring” is fine, but ‘leaves’?  
 No, she leaves us nothing – I’d say, rather, that she flees!*

English cannot pun *dusk*, or season's *end*, into *giving something* to another (both *kure*), but, luckily, "leave" means either *departing* or *giving*.

行く春の御陰で夏も老駱駝 置き土産なる花の下馬鹿 敬愚  
*yuku haru no okage de natsu mo oiraku da okimiyage naru hana no shitaba ka*

*Leaves, Indeed!*

*What does Spring leave us when all her flowers fall or fade?  
 Something sweeter than ornament: the dark summer shade.*

Reading the last poem for yet another time, the translator could not help himself. The last glossless poem is his. The reading is not even close. The original's orthographic punning is so poor even Japanese will groan. Yes, he could not even translate himself. And last but not least, we have mourning for having to part from the beautiful season.

..

心にはたれもおもへどかはづほど 春のわかれを なくものはなし 蜀山人  
*kokoro ni wa tare mo omoedo kawazu hodo haru no wakare o naku mono wa nashi*  
 heart/s-in-as-for anyone thinks-but, frog extent spring's separation+acc cry one-as4 not

*In our hearts, we all know it is no joke  
 that none so mourn spring's passing  
 as they, who crying, always croak.*

Though early *haikai* poked fun at the serious lovers in *waka*, as *haikai* came to be equally serious about nature, we find it subject to satire. Shokusanjin, Emperor of *kyōka*, has observed something true, frogs are very loud in the paddies as Spring becomes Summer. In Japanese, frogs are specified. In English, the frogs (*kawazu*) could be dispensed with because "croak," raven's excepted, is frog-specific (*naku* means both "cry" and "croak" in Japanese) making this the rare case of a gain in translation because of something deliberately lost.

~~~~~  
 ♪ *Haiku, too?* The "Late Cherries" chapter of the 3000-poem *Cherry Blossom Epiphany* (another of your translator's 740-page monsters) is one of half-a-dozen chapters particularly full of old haiku that might be called *kyōku*. It seems that some themes just call for philosophical wit and this is one of them. While haiku has not been neglected in translation, the more playful side of haiku has, so readers just familiar with *Mad In Translation* and *The Woman Without a Hole* might not realize that Japanese light verse is not only found in *kyōka* and *senryū* but even in *haikai* as it is in *waka*. In respect to the haiku, let me provide just one pair of snake-legs: the ox cart was typically used by women of the Court and women, particularly older women, were more appreciative of the late-blooming cherries as the weather was balmy. The carts were gorgeous and the pace was leisurely and full of delight.

Summer means *Cuckoo, Firefly, Mosquitoes* &

きばさみをほとゝぎすまし夏木立刈透しても聞かんとぞ思ふ 星屋光次 1785
kibasami o hototogisu mashi natsu kodachi karisukashite mo kikan to zo omou hoshiya mitsuji
tree-shears+ cuckoo is/are summer-bosque clipping-transparent even hear-would think

*Bring me shears!
I'd thin the summer glen
where cuckoo hides*

*The better to hear him
when I am sitting inside!*

This Tenmei *kyôka* follows a wish to level mountains to see more of the moon in a wacky *waka* in the 9c *Tales of Ise* and for a gigantic fan *ô-uchiwa* to keep the clouds off the moon illuminating the vast plains of Musashino in Getsudôken's late-17c book-title *kyôka*. The competition to be the first to hear the cuckoo's tidings of summer was almost frantic. *Kyôka*-master Shokusanjin brings the beauty of *waka* to a poem that seems to suggest that if Japan had notary publics they might have been kept employed at that time of year:

ほととぎす鳴きつる影はみへねども きいた証拠は有明の月
hototogisu nakitsuru kage wa mienedomo kiita shôko wa ariake no tsuki

*Though I did not see the bird I have proof it was a cuckoo
that I heard in heaven's stamp – this perfect matin moon!*

Unfortunately, half the wit wants in translation. The “have=*ari*” in “have (proof),” morphs effortlessly into *ariake* = dawn-moon. The full-moon-as-stamp not uncommonly finished off a running, or rather flying anserine epistle, but the specification of the matin moon is brilliant as it has a far more chop/stamp-like appearance than the more luminous night moon. The next combines cuckoo and the favorite summer “first” of Edo *haikai*, the fresh bonito loudly hawked through town. Kisshû's poem is famous.

再現 いずれ負けいずれ勝つをとほとゝぎす共に初ねの高こう聞こゆる 橘洲
izure make izure katsu o to hototogisu tomo ni hatsune no takô kikoyuru karagoromo kisshû
which loses which wins? = bonito & cuckoo both first sound=price's highly sound 1739-1802

*Will Bonito beat
Cuckoo or Cuckoo defeat
Bonito? First, I fear
Those bids and calls will burst
both my eardrums & my purse!*

*What bids & calls!
Will bonito beat cuckoo
& break my purse?
Or, cuckoo the bonito
& my eardrums burst first?*

After a singularly uninspired reading (“*Which one will lose / And which one will be the winner? / The bonito or the cuckoo? / The first notes of both of them / Sound awfully high.*”) Donald Keene, describing the two puns, one tricky (win/beat=katsu+accusative *o* ⇒ *katsuo=bonito*) and one easy (*sound=ne=price*) pronounced this a prime example of a poem that loses everything in translation. *That is true*. If only he were less keen to put down a genre he was evidently incapable of translating by statements such as “*Puns and verbal dexterity were also valid excuses for writing a kyôka.*” Would Keene say that about *English* light poetry? Are rhyme (a sort of pun) and the ability to turn a word “excuses” for, say, Shakespeare’s sonnets, or, for that matter any witty poetry? Here’s a paraverse:

*Bonito bidding goes so high it drives me cuckoo, that I know –
But cuckoos are themselves so loud they’re driving me bonito!*

This shows that if we drop the *beating* and *losing* in the original but keep the colloquial *tone*, introducing a pun that only works in English and play with *our* idiom, we *can* still have a poem, not the same one, perhaps, but if the poet read English . . . Our pleasure writing and delight reading does not come from the wordplay Keene calls an “excuse” for poetry or the ideas he might consider a reason for it, but from their union.

かしましや此里過よほととぎす みやこのうつけ いかにならん 山崎宗鑑
kashimashi ya kono sato sugiyo hototogisu miyako no utsuke ika ni matsuran sôkan
 noisy! this country/village pass+emph., cuckoo, capital’s idiots how-much waiting+emph.

*You noisy bird,
fly this country town!
Go, cuckoo, go!*

*The airheads in Kyôto
Await your first sound.*

*What a ruckus!
Hurry it up, pass through
this town, cuckoo!*

*The fools in the Capital
breathlessly await you.*

Cuckoo were thought to explode into song when the monsoon low was followed by a dry high. Migraine sufferers waited to hear the first cuckoo for relief. Yet, there are poems such as the one-man haikai link-verse above by Sôkan (1465-1553) that suggest the bird itself could drive you crazy. Sôkan does not exaggerate. Link-verse master Sôchô (1448-1532) finally snapped after cuckoo kept calling day and night well into fall out in the hills where he was on retreat, “*Hearing thee, nausea comes to roost, hototogisu! To me, thy name is hedotogisu!*” 聞くたびにむねわろければほととぎすへととぎすところそいふべかりけれ *kiku tabi ni mune warokereba hototogisu hedotogisu to koso iu bekarikere*. One *mora* changes and the cuckoo became a *puke=hedo and=to* the geezer=*gisu*. Almost 300 years later, Issa, who sometimes complained of noisy cuckoos getting on his

nerves found a way to put that excessive energy to good use when, in a haiku, he asked the bird to drive his headache out!

螢をはあつめて学ふいにしへの 人をひじりといふは尤 永井走帆
hotaru o ba atsumete manabu inishie no hito o hijiri to iu wa motomo sôho
 firefly/ies+emph. gathering learn ancient people+acc. sage(=firebutt)-as say natural

*Gathering fireflies to study with – no wonder we the men of old
 Call “hijiri,” or, “sages of the burning butt,” not cold!*

The *kyôka* from the 1730 anthology 狂歌乗合船 (*kyôka* joint-readership?) is a delightful *just-so* etymology of 聖 *hijiri*, a *saint* or *sage*: *fire=hi* 火 + 尻 = *jiri=ass*. Snow was piled up by the window in the winter and fireflies gathered in the summer by the diligent reader of old too poor to afford candles or lamp oil. Such was the stuff of legend, the heroic scholar, or scholar-to-be of ancient China, inherited by the entire Sinosphere. Still, one finds more use of fireflies to see the face of a lover or light the way to her house than for book learning in romantic Japan of old and most firefly *waka* are love-poems. Indeed, all but the above firefly poems in this book almost ended up in the chapter on Love.

さかさまに恋もなる世の螢かな 胸にはもえて尻そこかるゝ 玉吟抄
sakasama ni koi mo naru yo no hotaru kana mune ni wa moete shiri zo kogaruru 1532
 reversed love+emph becomes world's fireflies!/?/: breast-in-as-for smoldering butt+emph burned

Left

*Even love is
 upside down in this
 firefly world:*

*The breast is inflamed
 But the ass gets burnt.*

Right

*Torches, lamps,
 we hold out in front,
 to walk w/out fear*

*So what's with fireflies,
 Why light up the rear?*

人の行前はちやうちん明松や ほたるは尻をなと照らん 玉吟抄
hito no yuku mae wa chôchin taimatsu ya hotaru wa shiri o na to tereruran
 person goes before-as-for lantern, torch and/: firefly-as-for butt why(?) shines?!/

The 16c *Gyokuginshû* collection has two poems per subject, a judgment and comments. Usually one is favored, but these by 釈三ト & 山蒼斎 that Monk Junpo (潤甫和尚 who, for all I know, may have written them, too) judged equal, as both put the cart before the horse 前後顛倒の作法同科 in one way or another. A later *kyôka*, only alluding to the *contrary-to-nature* vector of the burning, improves the “left” poem even further:

若衆を思ひのたまかほたる火の むねはこかれで/て?しりそこかるゝ 入安 1610
 wakashû o omohi no tama ka hotarubi no mune wa kogare de/te? shiri zo kogaruru nyûan
 young-crowd=gay+longing soul/s? firefly-fire's breast-as4 burns-w/ butt+emph chars ~狂歌百首

*Could those souls
 be born of passion for a gay?
 Behold the firefly*

*Breasts may burn, but, hey,
 The butt is what gets fried!*

*Could those souls
 be longing of a gay fashion?
 Behold the firefly*

*Breasts may burn from passion,
 But when the ass burns you cry*

*Could those souls
 be longing for gay boys?*

Firefly passion

*Burning in the breast annoys
 But the buttocks are consumed!*

Izumi Shikibu's (和泉式部 c970-1030) *waka*, in loose translation as the reader may easily find dozens of translations for comparison, "Longing for him, even fireflies on the moor seemed to be / sparks of burning passion, embers of my soul, of me!" (もの思へば沢の螢もわが身より。。 *mono omoeba sawa no hotaru mo* . . . is one of the most beautiful ever written. As one of the hundred used in card games, it was so well known chances are the above *kyôka* are inspired by it or parodies of it. The "those" prefacing "souls" reflects the extent to which that idea was known, but, without the *longing=fire* pun, nothing can prevent loss in translation.

あけ行はもゆるほたるも影きえてけふりを水にのこすなりけり 喜多院入道 夫木
 ake yukeba moyuru hotaru mo kage kiete kemuri o mizu ni nokosu narikeri kita-in
 dawning/lightening proceed-when burning fireflies' form/light vanished
 smoke+acc. water-in/on remain is+emphatic-finality d.1202

*With the dawn, all the burning fireflies were gone
 and only their smoke remains on the water.*

This is a *bona fide waka* so beautiful any translation will do and yet the metaphor so bold that it could have been devised by a Tenmei era *kyôka* poet or a 20c *tanka* poet. And there are more such:

いにしへの のもりの かかみ あとたえて とふひはよはの ほたるなりけり 寂蓮
 inishie no nomori no kagami ato taete tobuhi wa yowa no hotaru narikeri monk jakuren 家集
 ancient field-guard's sight/reflection aftr dying/fadng flyng-fires-as-4 late-night fireflies are! d.1203

*The mirrored souls of the guardians of old fade before my eyes;
 Our signal-lights in the wee hours of the night . . . are fireflies.*

In the 7c, a system of smoke signals by day and fire by night from a web of hilltop, or otherwise raised, platforms was started to guard against invasion by sea. It did not last a hundred years in most parts, but the name “flying-fire” for the stations and the guards captured the romantic imagination. (Oddly, *stepping stones* in gardens, also “fly/leaping (rocks),” are *tobi-ishi*, not *tobu*~.). Here is another *waka* pushing the envelope:

このまより みゆるはたにの ほたるかも いさりにあまの うみへゆくかも 喜撰
ko no ma yori miyuru wa tani no hotaru ka mo isari ni ama no umi e yuku ka mo kisen 1313
 trees-between-from appear-as-4 valley's ffs maybe, lights-as fisherfolks' sea-to going maybe

*Are those fireflies down in the vale we spy through the trees
 taking their light to the sea to help the fisherfolk, maybe?*

What makes this delightful *waka* doubly *kyōka*? First, tiny glowing bug-butts helping out night-fishermen is a crazy idea. Second, it plays in a good-humored way – facetious sarcasm? – with a *Tales of Ise* poem where the anti-hero's visit to a seaside inn gave rise to a rustic poem conflating fireflies, stars in the river and distant fishing fires. Jakuren, a century earlier, made one of those untranslatable *quicksilver waka* Waley lamented, the word-order of which must be juggled to keep the modification and the modified fireflies together, though both may apply to those fires.

たのむへき ゆくへとみるそ あはれなる ほたるはかりの あまのいさりひ
tanomu beki yukue to miru zo / awarenaru hotaru bakari no ama no isaribi jakuren d.1203
 desirable(from faith) destination as see+emph.! beautiful/sad ff-amount's fisherfolk's lights

*No larger they than fireflies so beautiful and sad that show
 The way all of us must go . . . The fires of the fisherfolk.*

While no *kyōka*, this allusive variation is higher poetry than the *Ise* “original” and shows that it is wrong to assume that derivative poems are less than what they take-off from. I.e., ruling out *kyōka* as literature for not having its own material, as some critics do, is *wrong*. And, “*the way all of us must go*” is the *darkness* so beautifully expressed by Izumi Shikibu's *waka* the translator first learned of when the gracious and learned Liza Dalby informed him that an old haiku about sea cucumbers taken from the dark into the dark (our bellies) was not invented *ex nihilis*.

いたつらに身をたきすつる 蛍かなのりのためとは思はさるらん 中務爵みこ 御集
itazura ni mi o takitsuru hotaru kana nori no tame to wa omowazaru-ran nakatsukasa 夫木
 frivolously body+acc burn-doing firefly/ies!/?/: (holy)law-for-as-for think-not!!!

‘*Shadows of the Divine*’ you say? (in reply to Jonathon Edwards)

*The fireflies light up their bodies for the hell of it, right?
 I doubt they illuminate anything but the night!*

If the title mystifies you, by all means, check out Jonathon Edward's (yes, the same preacher of *flames of hell* fame) book. You will be pleasantly surprised. The attitude of some Occidental Christians who found meaning in Nature shares something with Japanese poets. The out-and-out doubt expressed here may be in a *waka* anthology but seems a *kyôka* for being brutally honest.

夏蟲はうらやましくやおもふらんおのか思ひにもえぬほたるを 能因法師 夫木
natsumushi wa urayamashiku ya omouran onoga omoi ni moenu hotaru o monk nôin
 moths-as-for enviously think-would: self's longing/flame-in burn-not fireflies d.1050?

*How luna moths must envy lightning bugs who are not burnt,
 But burn alive from the fire of love within their own hearts!*

~~~~~  
~~*The summer bugs must be envious as hell at those fireflies,  
 Who, burning from within, turn their yearning into light.*~~

~~~~~  
*How the Moths must with envy burn to see the Fireflies
 Ignite themselves from within, whenever they desire!*

~~~~~  
*To luna moths, nothing is more envious than a firefly,  
 Who can himself annihilate in the flames of his desire!*

~~~~~  
*How the Moth must burn with envy for the Firefly;
 Lit up by his own passion he need not fly to fry!*

Again, this came from a collection of *waka*. Yet, there is something about the contrast of two burning bugs that seems *mad*.

~~~~~  
 人を網へ入たやうなる蚊屋の内は赤貝も有蛸章も有けり 貞柳 置みやけ  
*hito o ami e ireta yô naru kaya no uchi wa akagai mo ari tako mo arikeri teiryû* 1654-1735  
 people+acc net/s-to put-in like is mosquito-net's/s'-within-as-for red-shell too is/are octopus too is/are

*Mosquito nets make all men fish and each a different dish:  
 Some boast red ark shells and others cherished devilfish!*

Japanese knew the red shell, commonly translated "ark shell," meant a mature woman's private part (from its uncanny resemblance to the vulva) and the *octopus* (*devilfish* is my deliberate mistranslation), *tako*, was short for "octopus pot," *tako-tsubo*, a rare treat best translated as *octopussy*, i.e., a vagina that clings like an octopus to the hand of one who reaches in for it, and/or its owner. The *kyôka* improves by knowing the muggy summer nights in Japan. (More sea life in *Octopussy, Dry Kidney & Blue Spots* 2007).

蚊は富士の山ほど多き裏屋小屋ならぬ思ひのもゆる大鋸屑 1734  
*ka wa fuji no yama hodo ôki urayakôya naranu omoi no moyuru okakuzu teiryû*  
 ‘squitos-as-4 fuji mtn/s amount many backstreet small-flat become-not longing’s burning sawdust

*Back-alley shacks  
 with mosquitoes abundant  
 as Mount Fujis*

*Burning saw-dust – what a joke:  
 Hopeless love goes up in smoke!*

*No back-alley flat  
 with mosquitoes as thick  
 as Fuji is high,*

*Love’s labor lost, I burn within  
 Smudge enough to sting my eyes!*

Using much to describe many, i.e. a quality with gross size, reverses the practice common in traditional Japanese poetry of describing intense longing in terms of numerous or rather countless waves or grains of sand. Playing with such rhetoric in the first half of the poem anticipates longing in the second, but is also confusing, for Fuji could also be read as Fujis. Climbing Fuji as a spiritual exercise was common at this time and (small-scale) model Fujis were found in scores of cities around Japan; so the reference to the number of Fujis might be a novel sort of hyperbole where not the target of the hyperbole but the hyperbole itself is hyperbolic (as many Fuji models as mosquitoes!?). The 7-7 *ku* take the love-as-burning trope, usually likened to burning-off salt for the bitter tear connection, and combines it with saw-dust, a cheap smudge. The *naranu* “un-fulfilled” pegged on the “longing/love” puns as “hum-not,” making readers imagine the noise made by the mosquitoes while it disclaims what comes before it as the true message of the poem in true classic style. Much was lost in translation, but the second reading, with stung eyes added, worked so well the translator gave up an alternate that started, “*Had we but smudge enough and wine, mosquitoes, lady, would be fine . . .*” despite the attraction of a saw-dust and lust that promised a marvelous end.

~~~~~  
 軒にきて鳴 音やかまし 長さほでてうどうつせみうちころせかし 月洞軒
noki ni kite naku ne yakamashi naga sao de chôdo utsu semi uchigorosekashi getsudôken
 eaves-to coming singing sound noisy long pole-w/ whack cicada hitting-kill-would

*It came to the eaves, crying in a voice so shrill I took a long stick
 And whacking the short-lived cicada made its life shorter still*

~~~~~  
*It came to the eaves and cried up a storm until, growing deaf  
 I picked up a stick and beat that damn cicada to death*

While the pun on the verb “hit,” *utsu* playing with *vanity* or *mortality* + *semi* (cicada) is good enough to justify a poem, I believe, it is a true report as a cicada up close is so damn shrill, I too have thought, *Kill! Kill! Kill!*

~~~~~  
 While the author made no promise to skip no significant seasonal theme, the experienced reader of Japanese poetry may find something oddly lacking from the summer, *heat*. Odd because the subject inspires more hyperbole than any other natural phenomenon so we might expect poets who loved to exaggerate and compete to be outlandish would have made so many such poems that they would have forced their way into this chapter. But the truth is this. There are surprisingly few. Probably, that is because by the time *kyôka* were written in a major way by the lower-ranking samurai and others who experienced climatic extremes (nobles summered on sea-side or in mountain resorts), *haikai* had already worked the lode so thoroughly – you may find fifty or a hundred examples one after another translated by Blyth – few if any nuggets were left. Or, even if more interesting hyperbole might have been invented, awareness of coming later might have had a psychological affect on the poets. Who knows if trope across genres of literature is not subject to an unwritten law similar to the competitive exclusion found in biology.

納涼の狂歌題に吐かたきと直重方より云こしけるきくひとことに左いふとてかく云やりける
 よむ歌をきく人毎にひやされて ひやあせかけば 爰ぞ納涼 黒田月洞軒
yomu uta o kiku hito goto ni hiyasarete hiya-ase kakeba koko zo nôryô getsudôken
 read song/pom+acc hear peple-each-by kid=chill=ed cold-sweatng here+emp keep-cool

On being told by Naoshige that he was having trouble writing a *kyôka* on the theme of keeping cool [in mid-summer heat], I sent him this:

*Read a bad poem & ridiculed by all, suffer to become a clown;
 The cold sweat upon your skin will surely cool you down!*

~~~~~  
*Whenever I read they laugh at my poems and hating defeat  
 Cold sweat visits me and then and there I beat the heat!*

~~~~~  
*Each time I read a poem they never fail to laugh at me
 And with my own cold sweat I beat the heat easily!*

As the reverse side to summer heat, cooling down, or “storing the cool” 納涼 is also under-represented in *kyôka* compared to *haikai*, except for *ghost stories*, which Tenmei *kyôka* filled books with, as mentioned in the *Mad Fantasy* chapter, are part of the greater theme of cooling-off as they made one shiver (and because they were told at night when it cooled down, but not much). The above poem by Getsudôken is the exception and one of the best comic self-denigration or self-deprecatory poems ever written. In fact, it is so good that your translator believes it makes up for the shortcomings of this chapter.

Mad Snake Fall: *Star Lovers, Bugs & Chestnuts*

天の川羽衣着たら飛び越えん げに空事ぞかささぎの橋 貞徳 百首狂歌
amanogawa hagaromo kitara tobikoen ge ni soragoto zo kasasagi no hashi teitoku 1571-1653
heaven's river feather-robe worn-if flying-cross-would really sky-thing/fiction+emph magpie-bridge

◎ Star-crossed Logic ◎

*The Milky Way
is easily crossed, I bet
in a feather robe*

*Magpie bridges in the sky?
How silly can you get!*

*Heaven's River
Don't they all have wings
to get across it?*

*Feather bridges? My, my,
That is magpie in the sky!*

This idea-first *kyôka* by the infamous nominalist Teitoku takes a general mythical concept – the *hagaromo* or feathered robes worn by sky-dwellers, mostly beautiful maidens – to challenge a particular one – the birds were supposed to make a bridge for the cowherd to cross to his weaver on this one night of love per year on this Seventh Night of the Seventh Month, the first of Fall, using the phrase “is really a tall-tale,” where the word he uses for *tall-tale* (one of many in Japanese) *soragoto*, literally means “sky-thing.” With many versions of this tale from China (where, unlike Japan, the weaver rather than the herder travels across the Milky Way), contradictions abound. When it rained on this night, oar-splash from the herder's *boat* was the common metaphor. So how does Shokusanjin approach this?

七夕を思へば遠きあめりかのあまさうねんの事にや有けん 蜀山人
tanabata o omoeba tôki amerika no amasônen no koto ni ya ari ken
seventh-eve+acc think-when america's amazon's thing re.!+hypo.

*When I think about this seventh night, I cannot help
Seeing them in America, crossing the Amasônen!*

~~~~~  
*The two Stars, I imagine them far off – in America;  
Ama-no-kawa, Heaven's River as the Ama-zone!*

This is less comic than remarkable. Who would guess the Japanese, after 200 years of isolation, were so conversant with the New World! The Milky Way is “heaven's river” in the Sinosphere; *Amerika* and *Amasônen* include two Japanese pronunciations of “heaven,” *ame* and *ama*. *Amasônen*, of North European derivation, has no long “ô.” Was it coined for the *sônen* 想念 “thoughts,” or a loving and a loose pun (rare in Japanese) on the reification of *love-me-slender-love-me-long* thread of lasting romance, namely, thin white noodles called *sômen* eaten on that day? Over fifty years before, Ôsaka's great *kyôka* master, Teiryû (1654-1735) introduced

“noodles thinner than a spider’s thread” for this night with a poem combining the folk belief of the spider as omen of a lover’s visit often found in *waka* with the long-and-thin love idea:

ひこほしの来へき宵なりさゝかにの蜘蛛の糸より細きそうめん 貞柳 置みやけ  
*hikoboshi no kubeki yoi nari sasagani no kumo no ito yori hosoki sômen teiryû*  
 herderstar’s come-should eve becoming spider’s thread-more-than thin noodles

*The herder star will come tonight – only a spider could spin  
 noodles as thin as these prepared while she waits for him.*

..  
 The original breaks after the 5-7 and does not spell-out so much. Milky Way and spider thread were most beautifully strung together by Saigyô:

天の川流れてくだる雨をうけて玉のあみはるささがにのいと 西行 d.1190  
*amanokawa nagarete kudaruru ame o ukete tama no ami haru sasagani no ito saigyô*  
 heaven’s rivr flowng falls rain+acc catchng drop/gem=soul-net stretchng spider’s’ thread

*The thread of the spider pitching the net of pearls  
 that caught the rain spilt from the flow of the river of heaven.*

~~~~~  
*The galaxy flowing falls as rain, the drops of which caught,
 a pearly net is pitched of spider thread.*

A perfect ‘Japanese-style’ plotless poem, “*The House that Jack Built*” backward without “*This is~*” ! The first reading follows the original *flow* with only “*thin*” and two “*thats*” added, the second the original *order* from Milky Way to thread. *Hopeless*. Would the following be better?

*Rain drops overflowing from the Milky Way, Spider catches,
 until her web is so bejeweled, Gaien beauty heaven matches.*

~~~~~  
*From the Sky-river rain-drops fall: See Arachne spread  
 a web of stars to prove even heaven hangs by a thread.*

But is that a translation? In the Japanese, Saigyô’s simpler poem is fine as is. Nothing is added out of orientalism or bias for the ornate, but because otherwise the poem dies in translation. If *you* can keep it simple and alive, please send me your reading. Now, to get back to the noodles –

七月七夕官女 黒がみもいつか素麺としどしの七夕のうたよむとせしまに 蜀山 家集  
*kurogami mo itsu ka somen toshidoshi no tanabata no uta yomu to seshi ma ni shokusanjin*

~ The Woman in Charge of the Palace Weaving Festival ~

*Year after year, when did her black locks turn sômen white,  
 As she did her duty reading poems about the seventh night?*

This poem by Shokusanjin could be a *waka* or a *tanka*. Like Teiryû's *sômen* noodle poem it has a delicacy and apparent affection uncommon in *kyôka* which is only enhanced by a fine pun on noodles=*somen* turning into the verb for "to dye" or "to color" that we had to skip! Shokusanjin also wrote what may be the most comic *sômen kyôka* of all (七夕もすゝりてはなきたまふらん ひや索麭のながきわかれを 蜀山家集 *tanabata mo susurite wa naki-tamauran hiyasômen no nagaki wakare o.*). How sad this "cold noodle goodbye" is utterly untranslatable as neither *sobbing* and *slurping* nor long thin noodles and separation can be equated in English! Shokusanjin also wrote the second most droll of all Star Festival *kyôka*.

彦星のひくてふ牛のよだれより このちぎりこそ長たらしけれ 蜀山家集  
*hikoboshi no hiku teu (to iu) ushi no yodare yori kono chigiri koso nagatarashikeri shokusanjin*  
 herder star pulling said ox's/oxen's drool-from this vow especially long-has-been+emph. d.1823

*Long kept – longer  
 by far than the slobber  
 of the Oxen led  
 by our Cowboy Star –  
 Their Wedding Vows & bed.*

No *bed* is specified but *chigiri* does imply sex. But, why "second most droll?" See the first, by late-17c *kyôka* master Getsudôken:

ひくうしの鼻毛にとんぼつなぐとも ねがいの糸はかけぬふた道 月洞軒  
*hiku-ushi no hanage ni tonbo tsunagu to mo negai no ito wa kakenu futa-michi*  
 pulling-cow (herder star)'s nstrl-hair-to drgnfly tie evn wshng-thread-as4 hang-not forkd-rd

### *On Hanging One's Wish Out for the Stars*

*Though I could tie a dragonfly to a hair in the Cowherd's nose,  
 My desires are a wishbone: Must I split and not keep both?*

~~~~~  
*Though I could tie a dragonfly to a hair in the Cowherd's nose,
 Like split-ends, the thread of my desire, forking, goes nowhere!*

Plucking the nose-hair of a big fast animal was idiomatic for dexterity. Tying a dragonfly to the same of a Star, Hikoboshi, is novel. Wishes aimed at the Stars were written on colored paper and hung by thread from green branches. The poet apparently wants more than one thing. A boy and a girl? His wife and a courtesan? Does *kakenu* pun on "can't write"? Was he afraid of being read? Was there a "one wish" rule? Every year, Getsudôken got off on (pardon the slang, but Getsudôken asks for it) the Tanabata festival. Here is his fine physical foil to sentimental *waka*:

千夜をひと夜弓矢鉄砲よひお中 だいてねてよりそこがほし／＼
chiyo o hitoyo yumiya teppô yoi onaka daite nete yori soko ga hoshi hoshi
 thousand-nights+acc one-night bow-arrow gun good relation
 hugging sleeping rather than there/it-the want want(star x2)

A Thousand Nights compressed in One,
 they, who are close as crossbow & gun:
 no bundling visit for them, but *it!* – *It*
 is what they want to *sta+star-start!*

Getsudôken's original depends on *star=hoshi=want*, a homophone, and "there," *soko*, being vernacular idiom for *it*, raw sex. It also has a rough, primal quality lacking in the more sophisticated Tenmei *kyôka*. This is not to say Tenmei *kyôka* avoided the issue. Here is a hyperlogical take on it:

ひと夜をば百夜と契る織姫になぜお子たちが出来はなされぬ 楚泉 1785
hitoyo o ba momoyo to chigiru orihime ni naze okotachi ga deki wa nasarenu sosen
 1-nght+emph 100/many nght as vow/tryst weavng-princess-to y childrn have-as4 do-not?

*With one fall night worth a hundred, I just do not get why
 the Weaver's little children do not completely fill the sky!*

There is at least one *waka* (probably in the *Manyôshû*) wondering why there are no offspring unless it be star-dust (*hoshikuzu*). The high value of a fall night was *made in China*, but most Japanese know it from #22 of *The Tales of Ise*. To wit: *One night in fall may be a thousand of the other kind / but our love would not jade though we met eight-thousand times!* 秋の夜の千夜を一夜になずらへて 八千夜し寝ばやあく時のあらむ *aki no yo no chiyo o . . .* and response: *Though one night may be a thousand, when it's fall, / we still have more to say when the rooster crows at dawn.* Sôsen's *kyôka* equating the numerically expressed value of a Fall night with ample opportunity for procreation demonstrates the extra step taken by Tenmei *kyôka*. And speaking of numbers, the festival is in the *summer* now, because the date 7/7 was kept despite the change to the Gregorian calendar.

さひしさの種とはしらて秋風を植てくやしき萩の一もと 夢庵
sabishisa no tane to wa shira de akikaze o uete kuyashiki ogi no hitomoto muan
 lonelins's seed/s/cause knowng-not, autmn-wnd/s plantd, regret Miscanth. s. 1 clump

Miscanthus sacchariflorus: Planting the Seeds of It

*Had I known they would bear the lonely winds of fall,
 This clump of reeds would not be growing here at all!*

This *kyôka* plays with an old *waka* regretting having planted a cherry tree as it taught women inconstancy by scattering its petals so quickly.

色/名をめで折れるばかりぞ 女郎花 われ落ちにきと人にかたるな 遍 昭
 iro/na o mede oreru bakari zo ominaeshi ware ochi ni ki to hito ni kataru na henjô 9c
 color celebrating break only+exclam. maidenflower I fell-for came/happened people-to tell-not

*I only plucked you
 to keep your lovely bloom,
 oh, maiden flower,*

*Don't you go telling the world
 how I fell from my high horse!*

*Your charming name!
 I could not help but make you
 my maiden flower –*

*So please tell not a soul,
 It was beyond my power!*

One of the most famous *waka* not among the *100 Poet One Poem* selection. Indeed, this may be more famous than almost all of them. A preface says the monk, later arch-bishop, Henjô (816-890) spotted the flowers on horseback and reaching down to pluck, fell and right then and there (*fushinagara*), composed the poem. The contradiction between his request and behavior – *telling* the whole world by broadcasting his poem – is deliciously mad. Another Maiden Flower poem, equally interesting but structurally too complex to become famous was composed by the editor of the *Kokinshû* Ki no Tsurayuki.

おぐら山 みねたちならし なくしかの へにけむ秋を しる人ぞなき つらゆき
 ogura yama mine tachinarashi naku shika no he ni ken aki o shiru hito zo naki kks 439
 ogura mt. peak standing used-to=level calling deer's/s' passed+emph autumn+acc know person+emph not

*Could he wear down
 Mt Ogura? Such pacing and
 bellowing above,*

*Who knows how many falls
 that buck has cried for love!*

*Could they wear down
 Mt Ogura? Such pacing and
 bellowing above,*

*Who knows how many falls
 those stags have cried for love!*

This was in the anthology's "thing-name" section. As the underlined letters show, the original is an anagram. Englishing *maiden flower* would take twelve lines and too much time for this translator, who also regrets his inability to match the pun *narashi* = *used to* = *leveling* and the more important and hitherto unnoticed pun found in the last ten syllabets: ~ *aki o shiru hito zo naki*, in addition to meaning "there is no one who knows the *autumn/s* ~," *sounds like* "there is no one who ever *wearies* of (them, i.e., maiden flowers)!" The rest of the poem, punfully hyperbolizing unrelenting male interest as topography-changing rut, is but an elaborate pillow for that concluding pun to lie its light head on. This is as good a mad poem as any late-18c *kyôka*. It should be famous for its complex and beautiful layers of meaning. Because of the tendency to belittle cleverness on the part of Japanese literary critics, such wit may be lost to the broader body of poem-tasters, as finding it would only hurt the poet's reputation.

吹きまくるすそのゝ風に仙人もおつるばかりの白はぎの花 加陪仲塗 徳和歌後
 fukimakuru susono no kaze ni sennin mo otsuru bakari no shiro-haginohana kabe no nakanuri 1785
 blow-about/circling hem-field's wind-in/by saint/wizard even fall-amount white-clover=calve/s=bloom

*When the wind blows around the meadow hem, look out below!
 That saint might fall again to see clover=calves so whitely glow.*

On seeing the white thigh of a laundress, a saintly sage was said to have fallen off his cloud and into a river much like early astronauts splashing down into the sea. Clover long stood or, rather, bloomed for an aged beauty. Even saintly Bashô could not resist composing a haiku for old harlots at 'Clover Inn.' They were most appreciated when the fall wind, pushed back the foliage above, revealing more blossoms below as it scattered the dew. The homophony of clover and calf, both *hagi* are taken advantage of in this poem. If Japanese were breast-lovers and the clover a pear, such might be Englished, but as *is* . . . But, wait, – how about *this*?

*When wind blows up sweet Clover's skirt around the meadow hem,
 Her bloomers so white just might drop an old sage from heaven!*

..
 “Bloomers” and the Proper Name may not be in the original, but they do bring us closer to the right mood. Besides, the original less obviously differs from *both* readings in not being a narrative but a typical plotless “Japanese style” string of modification (~ *blah blah clover, then it's over*). Because the different syntax forbids reproduction of the flow without hyphenating the whole poem, killing it with passive constructions, or putting the subject first rather than last, translators almost invariably rewrite such plotless modification as a story. Another such:

里の子に追ひかけられて毬栗の地に逃げまはるかせの激しさ 朱楽かん江
 sato no ko ni oikakerarete igakuri no chi o nigemawaru kaze no hageshisa akera kankô d.1800
 country-kid/s-by-chased-spiked/burred-chestnut's-earth+acc-flee-circling-wind's strength

*The strength of the wind where prickly chestnuts fly on the ground
 beyond the reach of the village urchins chasing them around.*

This time, the flow of the original was kept intact at the cost of the order that was reversed. Steven D. Carter found a compromise solution: *So strong it can help / a fallen chestnut get away / from a village urchin / running along in pursuit – / that's how strong the wind is!* Note the work that went into this. “Strong” is mentioned twice and “fleeing” becomes “help . . . get away,” making the poem more comic than in the original, which, as is, is not a masterpiece. It would be if there were a preface about the author declining an invitation because he had *a cold* (wind in

Japanese) would do it. As the usual character for *wind* 風 was eschewed for the phonetic かぜ, the poem allows for that *cold* 風邪 reading! Because Akera Kankô was a great poet, your translator is confident that if he ever has a chance to examine his journals, if he has journals, such a preface or explanation will be found.

And, now a 17c *kyôka* where the chestnut is the subject.

手にとれは人をさすてふいかくりのえみの内なる刀おそろし 権僧正公朝 後撰夷曲集
te ni toreba hito o sasu to iu igakuri no emi no uchinaru katana osoroshi kôchô pre-1672
 hand-in take-if person+acc stab said spike-chestnut's smile-within sword/s scary #483

*See Medusa, turn to stone, but chestnuts are best left alone,
 For when one cracks a smile, it can pierce you to the bone!*

~~~~~

*'He'll be stabbed  
 who picks up a chestnut  
 from the ground;*

*Most dreadful of daggers  
 within a smile are found!*

~~~~~

*The Chestnut has a pleasant smile but beware its tricks,
 When you reach for its nuts, you find a beard of pricks!*

Priest Kôchô's 17c? *kyôka* uses a natural observation – ripe chestnuts crack a smile, but when you take the nuts you get poked – to illustrate an aphorism from the 14c *Taihei-ki*, popular tales of the Warring Era: “In those times, it was typical for men to hone one's sword while one laughed/smiled” (笑いの内に刀を研ぐは此頃の人々の心也 太平記 16). Puns on *within* = *uchi* = *striking* and *teeth/tooth*=*ha*=*blade/s* are lost. The first and last readings regain wit at the cost of losing the allusion to the aphorism.

..

~~~~~  
 夜鳴くは珍しからず昼の野へ虫のねごとをきゝにこそゆけ 白鯉館卯雲 徳和  
*yoru naku wa mezurashikarazu hiru no no e mushi no negoto o kiki ni koso yuke bôun 1785*  
 night cry as-for rare/attractive-is-not day's field/s-to bugs' sound-each hear-to espec. go!

*Crying at night is hardly rare enough to make one weep;  
 Go out and catch those bugs by day, talking in their sleep.*

~~~~~

*Crying at night is what they do, too boring, I say, to listen to:
 But daylight fields when bugs talk in their sleep – that's new!*

~~~~~

*Crying at night is old hat. – Get thee out to the fields by day  
where bugs talk in their sleep and catch them if you may!*

Most bug *kyôka*, dependent on bug names or familiarity with their calls, do not scan in translation. *Negoto*, “sleep-talk” puns as *root-by-root*, i.e., each bug’s dwelling. Even losing that, Hakurikan Bôun’s *kyôka* does.

---

めをと中にたゝ二つもつ衣をはかへあひてけふのはつやあはせん 雄長老  
*meoto naka ni tada futatsu motsu koromo o ba kae-aite kyô no hatsu ya awasen yûchôrô 16c*  
 wifehusbnd just two have dress+emph. exchnge tdy’s first meet(requiremnts)-would ~狂歌百

*W/ two pairs of dress between them, a man & wife use reason:  
Exchanging robes today, they, too, change with the season!*

The original puns on the name of the clothing. The *awase* ritually worn for the first time in the year in the first week of the Ninth Month, the last of fall – not really the start of the season, needed for the rhyme – is a robe with a lining. *Yûchôrô* splits *awase* from *hatsu-awase*, or First-*Awase*, to verb it. The meaning is *making it in time* or *trying to make ends meet*.

..

---

今日酒に菊もひたさぬ不性もの中ゝ命なかく有へき 辰巳  
*kyô sake ni kiku mo hitasanu fujômono nakanaka inochi nagaku arubeki tatsunomi*  
 today sake/wine-to chrysanthemum steep no-energy-person very life long has-ought

*He who today lacks even the drive to steep ‘mums in wine  
Will probably be the one to stay alive a long, long time!*

Taoism has long taught that doing nothing is the way to live long. It *also* has an alchemic side, albeit more interested in elixirs of *youth* than *gold*. The contradiction in the two endeavors, or rather the *do-nothing* and *do-something* approaches, is beautifully brought out in the *kyôka*, which supposes the man too inert to engage in a ritual for longevity is likely not to need it. The ceremony was on the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month.

大菊をめづる狂歌ははなかみの小菊を折てかくもはづかし 蜀山家集  
*ôgiku o mezuru kyôka wa hanakami no ogiku o orite kaku mo hazukashi shokusanjin*  
 big chrysanthemum+acc treat mad-song-as-for nose-paper Small-mum folding write embarrassing

*A mad poem about a giant mum?  
I blush for knowing it was done  
upon the tissue of a smaller one.*

The “blush” is mine. Though unlikely that *hanakami*, i.e. tissue-paper, punned with *hanikami*, i.e., *shy*, compensation was needed for a major pun lost in translation: “folding” (name-brand Small Mum tissue) +

“plucking,” both *orite*. While chrysanthemum was a fall theme in *haikai*, this 翫大菊 poem is utterly *kyôka*, as we feel no connection whatsoever with the natural world as one might were the flower used for what “Small Mum” was usually used for.

~~~~~  
 おく山の紅葉と見てや 猿まろが尻をも鹿のふみわけてゆく 蜀山先生
okuyama no momiji to mite ya sarumaro ga shiri o mo shika no fumiwakete-yuku shokusanjin 18c
 inner mountains' colored-leaves-as seeing!/: sarumaro's ass+acc also deer tread-split-goes ↓

Deep in the Hills

*'Tis when I hear
 the mating deer bleating
 softly as they go*

*Parting the crimson leaves
 that autumn does feel sad.*

*Thinking what
 he sees is fall foliage
 The buck stops*

*not here but, treading, parts
 Monkeyman's red buttocks.*

↑ inner mountain-in red-leaves tread-parting cry/call deers' voice hear time+emph. fall-as-for sad
okuyama ni momiji fumiwake naku shika no koe kiku toki zo aki wa kanashiki sarumaru 9c
 奥山に紅葉ふみわけ鳴く鹿の声きくときぞ 秋はかなしき 猿丸大夫

This was the lead poem for a *Monster* chapter titled *Maple Leaf Macaque & Homowisteria Rumps*. Shokusanjin's take on a *Hundred Poets'* poem attributed to 9c Sarumaru plays on his name, *Monkey-guy*. Japanese 'monkeys' are really *macaque*, red of face and rump. The mountains in the old capital area (Kyôto & Nara) are largely maple, like New England, fiery in the fall. Both poems began with my title, *okuyama*, mountains deep in the interior, embodying a concept of central rather than the peripheral remoteness. While purely perverted in translation, parting the foliage to progress is so common an expression in Japanese literature that, buttocks aside, the original feels almost *natural*. Still, Shokusanjin's less outlandish parody in his *Mad Hundred Poets One Poem* 狂歌百人一首 is better:

なく鹿の声聞くたびに涙ぐみさる丸太夫いかい愁たん 蜀山 狂歌百人一首
naku shika no koe kiku tabi ni namida-gumi sarumaru-tayû ikai shûtan shokusanjin
 cry/calling deers' voice's hear time-each tear-bleary monkeyman mighty maudlin c.1800

*Each time a deer bleat
 strikes his ear, I fear his eyes,
 poor Monkey Man!*

*How they overflow with tears
 now the maudlin Fall is here!*

At first, I thought our mad poet from a macho era of peace poked fun at men from a more heroic time who did not mind crying; but the *waka* dates back to the Heian era, a peaceful, even precious time, and Shokusanjin includes Sarumaru/o's bureaucratic rank, Tayû (lit. "bold husband") for it became the title for a top-ranking courtesan, who could be what Usanians call *drama queens*. Another *kyôka* parody by LNLS (lost name, lost source) is as true and every bit as sincere as the original *waka*: "*To hear the voices of crimson leaf-viewing drunks, deep in the hills, even the autumn can be quite funny.*" (奥山に紅葉見の客生酔の声聞く時ぞ秋もおかしき *okuyama ni momijimi no kyaku namayoi no koe kiku toki zo aki mo okashiki*).

..

やよ時雨もの思ふ袖のなかりせば 木の葉の後に何を染めまし 前大僧正慈圓
ya yo shigure mono omou sode no nakariseba konoha no ato ni nani o somemashi jien skks
 hey, shigure! thing-thinking sleeves' not-if/when leaves' after what dye-would? 1155-1225

*Tell me, Shigure,
 without the sleeves of lovers,
 what would you dye*

*After the colorful leaves
 of Fall abandon ye sky?*

Farmers see rain in terms of their crops, so the idea of rain dyeing flowers or fall foliage was probably a noble rather than folk invention. This *Shinkokinshû waka* seems a bit simple for a mad poem, but that charming "ya yo," a familiar way for a prelate to address the rain, and the cool rather than personally involved way love is addressed says *kyôka* to me.

やよ時雨猶うはぬりをたのむそや まだ色薄き漆紅葉に みとく 古今夷曲集
ya yo shigure ame nao uwanuri o tanomu zo ya mada iro usuki urushi-momiji ni mitoku 1666
 hey, time-rain, still outer-coat+acc., depending (on you)!/: still color-pale ivy-maples-on

*Hey there, Shigure, when do you plan to apply the final varnish?
 The lacquer-maples still look dull, don't let your reputation tarnish!*

Obviously the ivy-maples refer to the leaves, but "ivy" less obviously unless you know Japanese, is synonymous with the sort of lacquer once called Japanning. This new take on the *shigure*, by Mitoku (1588-1669), perhaps the first *kyôka* master with the polished style identified with later Tenmei *kyôka*, alters the idea of dyeing ever so slightly to painting, and dropping the teary sleeved lovers for the language of craft that the *haikai* of that time preferred. "Don't let your reputation tarnish!" is not in the original, but may well lie between the lines. The addition was still not enough to make up for the loss in translation.

こよひこの月は世界の美人にて素顔か雲の化粧だにせず 蓬萊帰橋
 koyoi kono tsuki wa sekai no bijin nite sugao ka kumo no keshô dani sezu hôrai kikyô
 tonight this moon-as-for world's beauty so bare-face? cloud's make-up even does-not 1785

*This full moon is a world-class beauty queen, alright!
 Bare-faced, I see her pass without one cloud of white.*

♪ Queen of the Firmament ♪

*Could tonight's moon
 bare-faced as only
 beauty dares
 have sent
 the cosmetic
 clouds packing?*

*Does her bare face prove the cosmic beauty of the Moon tonight
 scorns cosmetics, hence, no powder-puff cloud remains in sight?*

..
 Unless otherwise noted, the generic *tsuki*, or *moon*, is presumed full on the middle day of the middle month of Autumn. This one boasts a novel double *kango* (2-character) crown “*sekai no bijin*,” (the) *World's Beauty*. My second reading relates beauty and a bare-face. In a culture where it was thought conceited not to wear make-up (it would say, “I am so pretty I do not have to”), readers could fill in between the lines. Today, Japanese might miss the wit of “beautiful person” (*bijin*), but good readers would have known the Chinese used it to describe the moon (or sun) as the Lord, or Ruler on high. We see here the modernization and internationalization of *bijin*. Does Hôrai Sanjin 山人 Kikyô's poem laugh at the entire body of poems where men swoon over this luminous heavenly body? For comparison's sake, here is a ruder 17c *kyôka* by physician-poet Nakarai Bokuyô:

かつらおとこ雲の衣をふんぬいて丸はたかなる月のなりかな ト養 bokuyô
 katsura-otoko kumo no koromo o bun-nuite maruhadaka naru tsuki no nari kana
 katsura-tree man cloud-clothing/robes+acc jerk(rudely)-stripped/ing
 round/completely nude becomes moons appearance. bokuyô

*The Katsura man has stripped the moon, her clouds lie ev'rywhere
 Scattered . . o'er the firmament . . while she . . is absolutely . . bare!*

*The Man in the Moon has stripped off her clouds, every layer
 It's clear to see that Luna now is not just nude but bare.*

The Man in the Moon was popular with *kyôka*, especially female poets:

元山月 てら／＼と月のかつら男さす影もはづかしげなる老のはげ山 智恵内子
teratera to tsuki no katurao sasu kage mo hazukashigenaru rô no hageyama chie no naishi
 gleaming, moon's laurel-man beaming/pointing-out form embarrassed-becomes old bald mtn

*Light beams from the Man in the Moon need no bush but, say,
 Is that the crown of Old Mount Baldy blushing bright as day?*

~~~~~  
*The Man in the moon wears the laurels and makes the world swoon,  
 Poor old Mount Baldy, his blush is so bright you'd think it noon!*

~~~~~  
*His features lit up by moon-beams from the Laurel Man so fair,
 Old Mt. Baldy blushes bright to show the hair that is not there!*

This is by the most popular female *kyôka*-master Chie no Naishi, or Little Ignoramus. The moon man associates with a laurel tree, so we have a verdant moon and bare mountain; the word for *embarrassment* includes *shige*, i.e., *dense* with vegetation, unlike the mountain; the *kage* usually suggests the face of the *moon*, not mountain; the psychological mimesis *tera tera*, for gleaming/glowing, recalls temples = *tera*, where we have moon-viewing old men, who, in a well-known *haikai* are embarrassed not to have one good-looker among them. We met the handsome Moon Man and the poetesses in the Mad Love chapter.

くひたらぬうはさもきかずから大和 たつたひとつのもちの月影 濱邊黒人
kuitaranu uwasa mo kikazu kara yamato tatta hitotsu no mochi no tsukikage hamabe no kurohito
 eat-suffice-not rumor+emph hear-not sino-japanese just one rice-cake-moon-form 1785

*Let's pour our wine, then, lay back: when the cat's out, a man will play:
 There's cheese enough in this fat moon to feed Japan and all Cathay!*

~~~~~  
*Who ever found it not enough to go around. . . – How can  
 just one mochi called the Moon fill up both China and Japan!*

In countless *waka* written long before the Moon envied Japan, when the yet-to-be-united nation was at war within and without, the moon, as something men all over could enjoy simultaneously without competition, embodied world peace. The first *kyôka*-master (of the Tenmei poets) said to charge a 入花料, or large sign-up fee, to join his group, added a new element, if only in good pun: the new (14-day) full-moon is called the *mochi-zuki*, which sounds like *sweetrice-cake* moon (actually *mochizuki* 望月 *mochi* is written “hope”). And just one such miraculously suffices for all. Unfortunately, the similarity of *mochi* to the moon can only be appreciated by those who are familiar with it. That is one reason it was dumped for *cheese* in the first reading, a paraverse. Rice cake, as something sweet, was thought repulse drinkers, so the wine, too, is bogus, but the paraverse captures the easy natural atmosphere of the original.

今更に雲の下帯ひき締めて月の障の空ごとぞうき 唐衣橘洲 kisshû  
*ima sara ni kumo no shita-obi hikishimete tsuki no sawari no soragoto zo uki* d.1802  
 now more-yet clouds under-belt pulls tight moon's obstacle/menses' empty/sky-act! sad

臨機変約恋と云ふ事を  
 Bloody or Just Blue?

*Now, more than ever, cinching up her cloudy loin-cloth tight,  
 the moon's indisposed, or is it a pose, regardless, a sad night.*

Kisshû was Yomo no Akara's main rival at the dawn of the Tenmei mad poem boom. From youth, he excelled at playing with *waka* trope in a dramatic *haikai*-style 戯歌 and supposedly popped up with this poem immediately when asked for a poem on 'extemporaneous love' by his *waka* teacher. His original combines the old trope of an obstacle to (seeing) the moon as the menses and the erotic word for a woman's loin-cloth "lower-belt," rarely applied to clouds around mountains (usually, just belts) puns sky-thing and fiction (*soragoto*) and sadness +float. I have seen this poem cited in a number of books, partly to illustrate why Kisshû, unlike Yomo no Akara, did not become popular. For all its cleverness, it is not off-the-wall, and while it has been praised, the two simple older *kyôka* about utter nudity of Princess Sao and the moon are more appealing. However, I have seen too little of Kisshû's work to judge it as a whole.

十三でぱっかりはれし空割れに月の障りの雲もかからず 万載狂歌集  
*jûsan de pakkari h/wareshi soraware ni tsuki no sawari no kumo mo kakarazu yomo no akara*  
 thirteen-at suddenly clear/parting sky=empty-split-with moon-blocking-clouds even attach-not

*On the thirteenth, the sky suddenly parts and, lo! and behold  
 Free as a bird, the moon pops cloudless out of the fold!*

~~~~~  
*At thirteen, it suddenly splits open, an empty slit
 in a sense, still cloudless & the moon yet to visit*

This poem by young Shokusanjin plays with a saying to the effect that a girl "splits open at 13 and sprouts hair at 16" 十三ぱっかり毛十六. The *kyôka* dictionary from which it popped into my view calls it a 大バレ or "real dirty." As with Kisshû's poem, it depends upon *moon* and *menses* being one (rather than parted by Anglo Saxon and Latin, or whatever as in English). The dictionary editor Suzuki Tôzô does not explain why he chose the poems he chose, but this poem has two things going for it. First, it shows the first-man of *kyôka* could be as vulgar as the rest (such as Kisshû whose menstruating moon is better known). Second, it is remarkable for being one of a small number of poems with a single letter pun doing everything. は= *ha* could be pronounced "wa" as *ghoti* is *fish*.

~~~~~

A few boring points before preceding to Winter. First, unless the New Year is included with the Spring rather than treated as a Season, Autumn is the largest season for poetry in Japan. It contains both the Star Festival (*tanabata*) and the harvest moon (usually just the moon, the bright moon or the fifteenth-night), that is, two of the top three seasonal themes in *waka* (spring tree blossoms, once plum, later cherry are the third). While Tanabata was also given much attention by *haikai*, it was not a *haikai* monopoly – as was the case with *summer heat* – there was no competitive exclusion. *Kyôka*'s take on the subject seems more on the line of an extrapolation of the *waka* tradition which could itself get pretty silly (see *pages* of Lady Daibu's poems in the 740-page *Monster*). Second, pardon the confusion about *shigure*, called a Winter phenomenon in the parody chapter! As colored leaves are clearly Autumnal, the "*shigure*" that dyes them obviously cannot belong to winter. This rain is what *haikai* poets call *mura-shigure*, not a cold drizzle but quick sprinkles brought by clouds usually metaphored as a little monks coming down from the mountain temples to beg, but which Bashô, in one of his maddest haiku, metaphored as a dog's *kakebari*, or the sort of quick pee a dog makes to mark his way about . . . But, here is where the confusion cannot be helped, the Autumn showers, as a type of *shigure*, are often called simply *shigure*.

..

~~~~~

♪ **Infamous nominalist Teitoku?** This good man is often put down as a poor poet who was all pun and no substance. While he did indeed favor that side, he also was a conceptual – or, metaphysical – poet who could even be lyrical. Be that as it may, if said playfulness is connected with a healthy Taoist mindset and the puns associated with Jungian synchronicity, even such criticism seems shallow.

♪ **Clover.** The Japanese hagi is not like the typical Irish clover but a "bush-clover," *Lespedeza bicolor*.

♪ **Ghoti as fish?** Invented by George Bernard Shaw, who suggested we pay for the Atomic Bomb project by dropping silent letters – saving secretarial and printing expenses – to show how odd English spelling was. 蛇足 : the *gh* from "laugh," the *o* from "women," and the *ti* from "nation."

♪ 日本語ばかりのオマケ : ばら／＼にちよつと傘かす其の礼をうくるは時雨の賃といふへき 流水 狂歌乗合船 1730 (蛇足 : かの亭のかけですね)

Mad Winter: *Colder than Snow, the Year's Cruel End*

寒き夜はいかなる歌もよみつべし あまりかゞめは 人丸になる 宗也 古今夷曲集
samuki yo wa ikanaru uta mo yomitsubeshi amari kagameba hitomaru ni naru sôya/munenari 1666
cold-night-as-for whatsortof song+emph read-should too-much curling-if hitomaru=man-round becomes

*On a cold night, what old poems should a person read?
With arms & legs pulled in, I'd keep Hitomaru around!*

If you know the popular name of the ancient poet Hitomaro, that is, Hitomaru literally means *person+round*, no further explanation is needed. The *shigure*, time-rain, should start off this season but we have it with the Mad Parody. The cold usually comes later, but there is not much straight cold in 31-*mora* poetry and the above is such a fine example of the sweet and light side – as opposed to the hard-boiled light of Yûchôrô and Getsudôkan – of old *kyôka*. The coldest part of the winter implied by the Hitomaru *kyôka* comes late in the season. Cold rain, *shigure*, the Gods-gone Month and the unpopular but ubiquitous God Poverty (who should be gone but usually isn't or goes and hopefully stays away) usually start off this season, but we have something about each elsewhere and this poem, though simple, corny and not really translatable, is heart-warming and novel in the manner of the poems by maverick poets such as Takuan, Ryôkan and Kotomichi. It deserves a special place at the chapter head.

今朝の雪にわが跡つけて出てけるをとはれにけると人や見るらん 多聞院日記 kkj
kesa no yuki ni waga ato tsukete(tsuke de) detekeru o tow/barenikeru to hito ya miru ran 天文三 1534
this morning's snow-in my track making (make-not-w/) left question/flew+emph. so people-as-for see-ought

*Going out and leaving footprints makes others want to know
Who paid a visit, brother, and so early through the snow?*
~~~~~ + ~~~~~  
*Going out this morning I left no footprints in the snow  
I must have been flying for all that other people know.*

This 16c *kyôka* is an exemplar of the sort of orthographical pun common when the use of a diacritical mark was still optional. The original has only two letters' difference つけて vs. つけ で and とはれ vs. とばれ . An ideal translation might have kept the two readings closer, but to do so *and* have it remain at least somewhat poetic would be very hard.

よし人は犬といふともふる雪にわがあとつけていでんとぞ思ふ 蜀山人  
yoshi hito wa inu to iu to mo furu yuki ni waga ato tsukete-iden to zo omou shokusanjin  
good person-as-for dog-as say even fall/old snow-in my trail making go-out+emph think

*The cultured folk may call me an old cur, but out I will go,  
To make and leave my trail, blazoned in the fallen snow.*

Hamada notes that *dogs like to play in the snow*, but snow-viewing by Bashô *et al* was already well known and that does not explain why “good” or “cultured” people had to be specified. Could Shokusanjin look back to the complaints by house owners about virginal snowfall violated by rude souls? If “dog” can pun with “not in” (*inu*) the poet may mean both that though recognized aesthetes are not in his neighborhood, he will go snow-viewing, *and* that he will also, like it or not, piss on the snow, a favorite practice and theme for Issa, self-proclaimed enemy of that “cold stuff.”

ふみなんはおしきにもりて聞しめせ足駄の歯になかけそ初雪 平鉄東作  
*fuminan wa oshiki ni tsumorite kikoshimese ashida no ha ni na kake so hatsuyuki tōsaku*  
 treading-as-4 regretful=fancydish-on piling eat+elegant longstilt-geta teeth-on put-not, first-snow!

*Don't tread on her! Pile her high upon a dish, and say a grace.  
 Save the teeth on your choppine; she's the first snow of her race!*

Gender, grace and race are added and the snow is what needs saving, but English loses both the fancy serving plate that puns as “regretful” before morphing into said dish, and a warning not to leave shoe-prints on the first-snow with “teeth” punning as the geta stilts and more. And the puns are but part of it: how to translate *kikomeshite*, or “eat up,” *in words elegant enough for an Emperor* that echo the mimetic *gikogiko* tooth-reply (*hagotae*, something like the food-test term “mouth-feel” but a concept known by all in Japan) of the snow and the obsolete *na ~ so* negative?

*It would be a shame to tread, so pile it on a plate;  
 Kick off your clods & eat the snow before it is too late!*

With all that going on or possibly going on, how could we not add alot to make up for the huge losses in translation? What if we surrender the shoes, only important for their *stilts=teeth*, and play with *tread*?

*The first snow is not water; do not tread, but go ahead –  
 Heap a helping on a plate and royally you will be fed!*

This poem provides a good contrast between what *kyōka* and haiku can do. Issa has a well-known *ku* saying simply, “*What yummy-looking snow this is: fuuwari fuwari!*” むまさうな雪がふうはりふはり哉 *mumasō na yuki ga fuuwari fuwari kana*). *Mumai* is child-speak for *delicious*. *Fuuwari fuwari* would be *fuluffy, fluffy*. To both caution on treading *and* discuss the tastiness of snow would be too much to combine in a haiku. That is where the extra 14 *mora* come in. But, for all that discussion, the translations reflect the translator’s limitations. If any reader owns or can affect the high-style, your services are wanted.

雪降りて 雪隠遠く下駄は無し 心にかかる 尻の穴かな 木下勝俊 = 長嘯子  
 yuki furite secchin tōku geta wa nashi kokoro ni kakaru shiri no ana kana kinoshita katsutoshi b.1569  
 snow falling w.c. far geta-as-for none heart/mind-on sets/weights butt's hole! i.e. chōshōshi d.1649

*The snow falls, the outhouse is far out & you got no geta:  
 Now it starts to prey upon the mind: your ass hole, fella!*

There is not even an allusion to snow-viewing here. We are back to the bawdy folk-style *kyōka* of the 16 & 17c aristocrat. This is a sort of riddle. You wonder where it is heading long before you get there; the fundamental rule for translating the poem is that the solution, *the hole*, must stay at the end. That *fella* is lame. Long-tooth *geta* were good for ferrying people across slushy snow, provided it was not too deep, but they do not easily rhyme and *choppine* (the stilted medieval shoe of many spellings) are not well-known. If we give up “*geta*” we can do better –

*Snow keeps falling, the outhouse is far and you got no shoes?  
 What's the “Can't stop thinking about your ass-hole blues!”*

~~~~~  
*Shoeless and far from the outhouse, snow takes a toll
 Hell is being fixated upon your own . . . asshole!*

While the subject matter is Ozarkian, the original is perfectly crafted, with a natural grace lost by the forced translations.

~~~~~  
 われがちに争ふてくふふぐと汁 もりかへのある命ならねど 山手白人  
 waregachi ni arasoute kuu fugutojiru morikae no aru inochi naranedo yamate no shirohito  
 me-win-as struggling eat swellfish-soup heaping-seconds is life is-not but 徳和 1785

*Fighting others to get a second dish of swellfish soup  
 Not that we will ever get another serving of life . . .*

Swellfish, like the sea cucumber, was a favorite winter subject for *haikai*. The latter was pretty much neglected by *kyōka*, but the former was popular, perhaps because matters of life and death lend themselves to comic treatment. All the world knows parts of this fish are deadly poison and all Japanese know the saying “*You are a fool if you eat swellfish and a fool if you do not.*” Anyone would think the first line of this didactic but witty *kyōka* should *also* have become an aphorism but, as far as I know, that never happened. *Kyōka*, like *haikai*, is full of swellfish/blowfish/globefish. The 740-page monster has a few more examples, but your translator has a book called *Swellfish Soup* on the back-burner – since 2003 – and does not want to serve up any more at this time.

老いぬとも(れど)又も逢はむと行く年に涙の玉を手向けつるかな 俊成 新古今集  
 oinu to mo (redo) mata mo awamu to yuku toshi ni namida no tama o tamuketsuru kana  
 aging am(when) again+emph. meet-not-w/, leaving-year-to teardrops/gems+acc offer/give

*Aging fast, what hope  
 have I to meet you again?*

*So, Leaving Year*

*Do accept my presents,  
 these baubles called tears.*

*Feeling my age,  
 not knowing if ever we  
 shall meet again*

*I send off the Old Year,  
 My parting gift – tears!*

This poem by Shunzei (1114-1204), father of Teika, editor of the *Hundred Poets*, is the best *waka* ever on *tears as jewels*. If the New Year was a time for foolish but, even including mixed feelings about aging, always joyful poems (as not to mar the re-creation), the Year's End was alternately mourned and kicked out if not around. Still this lament less for the Old Year than for the poet himself, as is the following *kyôku* by Issa composed three years before he kicked the bucket:

行くとしはどこで爺を置去に一茶  
 yuku toshi wa doko de jiji o okizari ni issa  
 going year-as-for where-at uncle+acc place-leave-as

*the years go on  
 when will they drop  
 this old man off*

*the years drive on  
 just when will the geezer  
 be left behind!*

*Just where will it  
 drop off the old man,  
 the leaving year?*

Like Shunzei, but more completely, Issa's concern was for himself and not the old year. He spent most of his time traveling from house to house so he may not have known where he would be, or he literally feared for his life, as the snow was making his roof creak and moan and threatened, in his words, *to turn him into sushi* – it was squeezed while lightly marinating in his day – *at any moment* (大雪にて家はみり／＼と鳴りて今にも鮓になるかと). But most old poems dwelled on the poor Old Year and almost 600 years after Shunzei offered his lachrymal baubles, Issa's contemporary Shokusanjin would cheerfully protest:

今さらに何かおしまん神武より 二千年来くれてゆくとし 蜀山百首  
 ima sara ni nani ga oshiman tenmu yori nisen nenrai kurete yuku toshi shokusanjin  
 now more-so what+emph. lament-would? tenmu-from 2000 years setting-go years c.1800



♪ Auld Lang Syne is doing fine ♪

*Why do I still waste my tears  
On yet another passing Year!*

*Haven't thousands, all the same,  
Left us since great Tenmu reigned?*

The first-person plural might be the better guess – pronouns are almost always guesses – but I like to imagine this *kyôka-master of masters* drinking heavily as was most proper at a Year-Forget Party with eyes moist for the lost souls and lost opportunities of the year and, perhaps for good things that he wished could last. The tears are not really for the year, but even in the facetious, or, in Japanese poetry, mostly in the facetious, one finds some truth. Yes, English essayists also played around with anthropomorphic units of time, but only in a farcical manner. Even the great Lamb (*Rejoicings Upon the New Year's Coming of Age*) cannot move us. But Issa with his simple end-of-year house-cleaning *kyôka* can:

..

煤ほこりはかで此世を占家に只身に添ふは月日也けり 一茶 文政七  
*susu hokori haka de kono yo o furu ie ni tada mi ni sou wa tsukibi narikeri issa*  
 ashes dust sweep-not-w/ this world old house-as/in only body-with accomp.-as-4 months-days not+

*This world is like an old house, hardly worth sweeping out –  
When all that stays with me are the months and the days.*

すゝはきの内より春はきにけらし ほこりたつ也霞立也 太女 銀葉夷歌集  
*susuhaki no uchi yori haru wa kinikerashi hokori tatsu nari kasumi tatsu nari futome*  
 soot-cleaning-within-from spring-as-for come-has dust rising-is mist rising is 1679

*Spring has sprung, and before our dusting is even done,  
!Up rise the clouds of soot!! Up rise the clouds of mist!*

Both poems refer to the annual soot-cleaning day when everyone (in modern times, even corporate officers) wraps a rag around their head and collectively wars against the soot accumulated over the year. It is close enough to the end of the year that, occasionally, the astronomically calculated solar Spring may fall on it. Issa's *kyôka* needs no more comment. The second, the first poem in the 1679 *Silver Leaf Ebisu Song Anthology* (*Ginyô-ikyokushû* 銀葉夷曲集) anthology of 1186 “savage songs” or “wild waka” reprinted in Broadview) is by 太女 Futome (fat-woman, possibly a pseudonym of the ed. Kôfû 行風?) is masterful in the original, where Spring's falling “(old) year-within,” or *toshi-no-uchi*, a calendrical anomaly so frequent it was not really an anomaly but a common contradiction, becomes “dusting-within” yet keeps both meanings by association. A lesser poet would have had “. . . the soot into the mist

*become.*” The translator had a hard time not letting rhyme talk him into doing just that. Lots of stuff rising into the air is propitious as it speaks of prosperity as noted in a famous *Manyôshû* poem of “*kokumi* country-viewing” – annual ceremony performed by the Emperor as a blessing. Whether poems about the spring coming within the old year ought to be among the New Year poems at the start or on the tail of the winter has long been debated. Your translator favors the start but considering the dusting, the winter is suitable here. Now, returning to the Year’s End, we shall focus on one aspect about it that the nobles who wrote *waka* missed.

~~~~~  
 しゃく金も今は包むに包まれずやぶれかぶれのふんとしのくれ 朱楽かん江
shakkin mo ima wa tsutsumu ni tsutsumarezu yaburekabure no fundoshi no kure
 balls/debts too now-as-for stuff-in stuff-cannot torn/desperate loin-cloth/[y]ears eve

*The money I owe
 I can no more hide than
 the fam’ly jewels
 barely in my loincloth rent
 as this old year’s arrears.*

..
 Play on balls as *gold*, or *money*, was old hat as balls in Japanese are gold-gems/balls (*kintama*). The *kin* in “debts=*shakkin*” doubles as “balls,” and the tail of the “loin-cloth=*fundoshi*” that barely holds them, after arriving to the “end” (*no kure*) becomes the *year* (*toshi*). Readers who recall the poem are right. This *kyôka* by Shokusanjin’s friend, Akera Kankô (1740-1800) is one of a dozen or so *kyôka* Englished two or more times.

除夜 借金首たけつもる大晦日門の雪さへはらひかねたり 加陪仲塗
shakkin wa kubi dake tsumoru ômisoka kado no yuki sae haraekanetari kabe no nakanuri
 debt-as4 neck/head up to buried last-day gate’s snow even dispel/shovel-off cannot 1785

*Up to my neck in debt, I fear it’s the last day of the year;
 Unable to go out to shovel snow, I’m buried in here!*

While the God Poverty was given attention by aristocratic 16 and 17c *kyôka*-masters, the less abstract theme of debt, something supposed to be paid-off by year’s end was developed by the more lowly merchant and samurai engaged in haikai and only reached *kyôka* when it was written by other classes in the 18c. The juxtaposition of being sunken in debt and literally buried because of fear of going outside in the above Tenmei *kyôka* is well-done. Issa, by the way, did have enough spare change to pay someone to shovel the snow off his roof so as not to be turned into *sushi* and enough spare humor to laugh at his poverty:

羽生へて銭がとぶ也としの暮 一茶
hane haete zeni ga tobunari toshinokure
 wings growing change-the fly-does year-end

*Money grows wings
 and as it flies off sings
 "Happy New Year!"*

Here, your translator has converted a so and so *kyôku* by Issa into a masterpiece by replacing the "Year's End" in the original with a touch of irony, " ~ sings / Happy New Year!" and doing that with an AAB end-rhyme, ideal for mimicking Japanese internal rhyme as it is within a sentence and for leaving the last line as a punch-line. That should be a lesson for the reader, who is invited to improve the translator's work wherever he or she can. Issa was, in many ways a genius. Yet, he may often be improved. The translator, who is less talented, surely may be bettered. So, when you can do it, do it! *Why not?*

除夜 鬼はうち福をは外へ出すとも 年ひとつづゝよらせすもかな 雄長老
oni wa uchi fuku o ba soto e dasu to mo toshi hitotsu zutsu yorasezu mo gana yûchôrô 16c
 devil-as4 strike⇒within happiness-outside putout even year one-by-one approach do-not wish

New Year's Eve

*If it would keep the years meant for me from ever getting here,
 I'd invite the Devil in and kick Good Luck out on her ear!!*

*Could it but keep
 one year from being added
 to my own, I would
 Welcome the bad & chuck
 good luck from my home!*

*Could it but keep
 one year from being added
 to mine, by my troth
 I'd call in the bad spirits
 & the good I'd send off!*

Vene mal, sale bene?

*Could it prevent
 one year meant for me
 from getting here,
 I'd have the demons stay
 & send happiness away!*

*Could it keep them
 from getting here, year
 after blessed year,
 I'd have the demons stay
 & send happiness away!*

いつ見てもさてお若いと口々に ほめそやさるる年ぞくやしき 朱楽漢江
itsu mite mo sate owakai to kuchiguchi ni homeso ya saruru toshi zo kuyashiki akera kankô
 when see ever hey hon+young so mouthsmouths-on praise leaving year/s regretful d.1800

*Hearing them say, "You look young as ever!" compounds my regret
 At giving up another year for a new one, older yet!*

いつ見てもさてお若いとわれは老 朱愚
itsu mite mo sate owakai to ware wa oi

(new years eve)

*Hearing them say,
 "You look young as ever!"
 I feel old today*

A singular leaving year that provides the setting *and* general years (plural) that justify the regret cannot be translated as one in English. It requires either a creative reading between the lines that is far more complex than the original, or a shortened, *senryû* version dropping the "leaving."

行としはどこで爺を置去に 文政句帖
yuku-toshi wa doko de jijii o okizari ni issa 1820's
 go/leaving-year/s-as-for where-at geezer+acc. abandoning

*The leaving year
 so where will this geezer
 be dropped off?*

*The years go on –
 when and where will they
 leave this geezer?*

This has long been a favorite year's end *ku*, though it is hard to make sense of without thinking of the *toshi* as plural, though such does not seem haiku. So, think of it as a *kyôku*, a short *kyôka*. I do. And, having misplaced his older translations of that poem, I had to look it up the original in the vol.1 of Issa's *All-works* (*issa zenshû*) and, as always, such snooping around brought a new discovery, a poem missed before.

わんといへさあいへ犬も年のくれ 文政句帖
wan to ie saa ie inu mo toshinokure issa 1820's
 "wan (bark)" say! come on, say! dog too year-end/beg

*New Year's Eve
 For Rover, too: say "Ruff!"
 You'll get enough*

Like *kyôka*, *kyôku* may not translate. Here, the wit is in the pun of *kure*, the year's "end = *gimme*." We saw the same in a departing spring *kyôka*.

One 2-page Winter chapter in the 740-page *Monster* was titled, “Three Takes on Snow: Dick, Swellfish & Fools!” This is the first page as-is:

*Lost to this world,
I feel my own body
is no longer me*

*But on days when it snows
I find I still get cold!*

saigyô (1110-90)

⇐ 捨果て身はなき物とおもへとも 雪のふる日はさむくこそあれ 西行
sutehatete mi wa naki mono to omoedomo yuki no furu hi wa samuku koso are
捨果て身はなき物とおもへとも 魔羅の怒日はしたくこそあれ 源内 ⇒
sutehatete mi wa naki mono to omoedomo mara no tatsu hi wa shitaku koso are

*I like to think
the world & I no longer
hang together*

*But when it snows, I feel
ev'ry bit as cold as ever!*

*Lost to this world,
I feel my own body
is no longer me*

*But on days my dick rises
I find I still wanna do it!*

gennai (1728-80)

*I like to think
the world & I no longer
hang together*

*But when my dick rises
to the occasion, so would I!*

The *waka* by Saigyô is included in some *kyôka* anthologies and played with by the encyclopedist Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779) in his *Biographies of Limp Dicks in Seclusion* (痿陰隠逸傳 *Naemara in'itsu den* 1768). The above is followed by a warning to always ‘shoot your wad’ lest you get gonorrhea and *really* come to hate the world. Gennai was nothing if not *au courant*. Such clap-catching scenarios were common to *senryû* of the time (see the *Menses* chapter of my *Octopussy*). The way the well-known *waka* is minimally altered – compare and you will see he does much better than me – reminds us of the most translated poet in this book, the mad poem master Ôta Nanpo (Yomo no Akara, Shokusanjin 1749-1823), who, as it turns out, some credit Gennai with discovering! The *Biographies*, which starts with a children’s ditty 童謡曰 advising us,

*If you're really gonna do it,
Then big is how you oughta;
Stick it up the buttocks
Of the Great Buddha at Nara!*

如做出事來 做得大則個、穿寧樂盧舍 那佛屁眼則個
suru nara ôki na koto shiyare, nara no daibutsu no ketsu shiyare - trans. Marceau

– may be found, in lively translation by Lawrence E. Marceau, in an episodic festschrift for Howard Hibbett published by John Solt’s Highmoonoon Press (2001). Maybe we oughta call the above a *mad ditty*, 狂謡 *kyôyô*! (又 狂訓歌?)

~~~~~

The last page (in size 11 font) barely made it out of the *Monster* and into this selection. It is here to make several points. First, we can ponder whether or not a parody, which may be considered a *kyôka*, is by virtue of playing upon a classic Winter poem, partly a winter poem itself. If one thinks of Saigyô as an old monk, the season becomes his life. Second, the children's ditty (that seems to be 8-5-8-5 song for actually singing) reminds us of the folk roots of the hyperbolic and bawdy *kyôka*. And, third – though you really need to read the whole work to see it – the loose yet stimulating associations of prose and poem both reflect an older tradition of mad writing (esp. *haibun*) and mad poetry and influence the new, in so far that Gennai was read by Shokusanjin – he *was* – and other Tenmei poets. Mad poems were always found in comic stories, but this sort of mock-serious essay, similar in some ways to Twain's *Mammoth Cod* (on the drawbacks of being well-hung) and *1601* (on farts), but more erudite for the way that philosophy and major figures of literature are treated, itself demonstrates the hyperlogical – mad from allowing reason to be free – nature of the best *kyôka*. And, finally, the pitiful male object provides balance for Getsudôkan's stinky female "beans" (pg. 96).

~~~~~

さゞれ石のいはほと成て毛がはえてそれをしらかにみよし野の春 月洞軒
sazare-ishi no iwao to narite ke ga haete sore o shiraga ni miyoshino no haru getsudôken
 pebble's boulder-into becomng, hair grows/wn that white-hair-as hon.+yoshino's spring c. 1700

直 清 方 へ は る 立 歳 暮 を く る と て
 ~ Asked by Naokiyo for something on Spring at Year's End ~

*The little pebble became boulder and grew into a hairy thing,
 That has become white-crowned mi-Yoshino in the Spring!*

..

Yoshino, the hills not far from Kyôto famed for (cherry) blossom-viewing, tended to have snow at New Year, but the preface here made it clear that this was an early solar spring. As Japanese do not have an Old Man Winter, it was surprising to find moss called "hair" to get us there. The *mi* is an honorific prefix used so often with Yoshino that your translator decided just this once to carry it as-is into English.

~~~~~

♪. Re.: *Unmarked Snow*. – *Kesa no yuki ni waga ato* . . . Since the first-person possessive (*waga* my) can be read as the third-person, much as the English "your" can include the speaker's, the odd lack of marks making it seem like the protagonist flew may have a nonsensical *solution* if the poem is taken as a riddle. As mentioned in explaining Shokusanjin's poem, dog, *inu*, is homophonic for not existing. What if the protagonist were a dog?

# Mad Exchanges: *Dandelions & 40 year-old Chickadee*

法師等之髯乃剃杭馬繫痛勿引會僧半甘万葉集  
*hôshira no hige no sorikui uma tsunagi itaku na hiki so hôshi wa nakamu* mys # 3846  
(bonzes' beards' shaving/en post/s horse/s tie/hitch painful/emph. not-pull!)

## A Laugh at the Bonzes' Expense

*Stubble that could,  
for hitching posts vie –  
Don't tug so hard, ponies,  
the bonzes will cry!*

## The Bonzes' Choice Reply

*Go ahead and laugh, you asses!  
When the reeve takes your taxes,  
by and by, it will instead  
be your turn to cry!*

檀越也 然勿言 五十戸長我 課イ受徴者 汝毛半甘 万葉集  
*dan-ochi ya shikamo na ii so sato-osa ga etsuki hataraba imashi mo nakamu*  
parishioners! say not reeve-the tax/tithe impose-if you too cry will *manyôshû* #3847

The first poem, following two roasting men for being too black or too white (skin color), is, like the mining of vermilion from a man's red nose or the offer to mow a man's underarms, a good example of a *Manyôshû*-style (8c) creative hyperbolic insult. The response implies forced tithing and, perhaps, that the monks were too busy making a living to devote time to grooming, or could not afford the proper tools. The translation failed to achieve the desired symmetry, so here is a new sort of rhyme that does:

## Monks Who Could Shave More

*Stubble that with hitching posts could double!  
Try, ponies, not to pull, lest the bonzes cry.*

## The Bonzes' Hair-raising Retort

*Dear parishioners, hush, lest your reeve should hear  
Your words, & raising taxes, make you cry more!*

Who knows what to call a first-and-last-word-in-a-line that rhyme? Not your translator! The first poem is clearly in the comic *kyôka* mode and the second, while not as clever is telling and answers tears with tears.



この頃のわが恋力記し集め功に申さば五位の冠 mys #3858  
 kono koro no waga koi-jikara shirushi . . . ,  
 these days' my love-power

*If I were to make a list of all the thankless things I've done for love  
 And submit it, I would win the Fifth Rank, or above!*

Vs.

*And if my efforts for the same bring no loving reward from you  
 I am off for the Capital, and see if I don't sue!*

この頃のわが恋力給らず京兆に出でて訴へむ mys #3859  
 kono koro no waga koi-jikara tabarazu . . .  
 these days' my love-power

This competing pair of poems – in the original, beginning identically and sharing the expression “love-energy/power/effort” 恋力 *koijikara* – are in the *Manyôshû*'s comic book 16. While less novel than some *Manyôshû* love poems or cruel kidding poems, they are closer in spirit to folksong and light in the manner of most *kyôka*. One recalls the classic country number where the singer imagines a statue of himself with a gilded tear-drop rolling from one eye erected at the Country Music Hall of *Pain*.

Both of the above pairs of poems seem ancient relics next to the poor wet-nurse exchange between scholar spouses Ôe no Masahira no Ason and Akazome Emon from the 1086 *Goshûishû*, rescued from obscurity by Edwin Cranston (*Waka* vol. 2A (pg 552)). Had this chapter preceded the *Maledicta* chapter, the exchange would be here rather than on pages 141-3.

此ほとはうち絶けるにたんぽゝを たまはりてくふ したつゝみかな  
 kore hodo wa uchitaekuru ni tanpopo o tamawarite kuu shitatsutsumi kana ng 1636  
 this amount-as4 exhaust=drum-attenuatingstop! dandelion+acc receiving-eat tongue-drum!

♪ Read when someone received dandelions from someone ♪

*Dandy, indeed! Your dandelions' pride, decimated just for me!  
 I humbly accept your gift and lick my chops ferociously.*

◆ ◆ ◆ ♪ The Reply ♪ ◆ ◆ ◆

*My pride is bigger than you think; don't worry, the number sent  
 'Tis but a small part, there will be more dandelions to present!*

たんぽゝをとたんたんとはやりもせて ちちつちつとそをくりこそすれ  
 tanpopo o to tantan to wa yari mo se de chichi'chi'tto zo okuri koso sure ng 1636  
 dandelion+acc much=drumming-mimesis send-not so a-bit=tapping-mimesis+emph do/send

Exchanges accompanying gifts may well comprise the lion's share of old *kyôka*, despite being poorly represented in books. As a guitar gives one an excuse to sing, a gift elicited poems from people who otherwise might refrain from writing. Usually, poem #1 is sent with a gift eliciting poem #2, a reply poem. It seemed odd to *start* with thanks, so the editor of a 1666 anthology dropped the preface and, reversing the order, had the reply sent w/ the gift— in Japanese, there are no great cats: dandelions = *tanpopo* are percussive. *Tan-tan-to* (*tan to* = many) sounds like a small drum-beat and *chichi'chi-to* (a bit) like tapping the rim, not to mention beating/clicking (*uchi*) tongues and a possible enjambed *hayari* chorus. Hence, it is also called *tsutsumi-gusa*, or “tomtom-grass.” The original order seems better. Otherwise, a different reading would be in order,

*Couldn't find enough of these dandy lion teeth, but bit by bit  
I'll send you more as I pull them, until you tell me "Quit!"*



*Not to worry! I will cook, chew & swallow, then when done  
With happy scalded tongue, lick my lips for ev'ry last one!*

When you read between the lines, there is *that* much difference (minus my many obviously added details and interpretation), depending on the order of the poems! That both may be read from the same words in Japanese tells us something about the language.

丸かれやたゝまるかれや人こゝろ  
*marukareya tada marukareya hitogokoro*  
かとのあるにはものゝかゝるに  
*kado no aru ni wa mono no kakaru ni*

丸くともひとかどあれや人こゝろ  
*maruku to mo hitokado areya hitogokoro*  
あまりまろきはころひやすきに  
*amari maroki wa korobi yasuki ni*

The Chamber Maid

○ 女中 = 竹斎 ○

*Round we must be,  
just as round as possibly!*

*The human heart*

*If it came w/ corners  
would catch on things*

The Captious Man

□ 理屈者 = 竹斎 □

*Round though we  
may be, let some corner be!*

*The human heart*

*Were it overly round  
would tumble too easily*

corners had-if things-on catch-would ⇔ round-if just-round-if human-heart/s ⇔ too round-if tumble easily

Chikusai, the famous early-17c fictional quack doctor and professor of mad poems of uncertain authorship, is credited with this exchange, where the second does not so much refute the first as provide an additional, equally astute observation on geometrical psychology. Together, they

comprise a lecture of soft philosophy. Shokusanjin would later garnish “a picture of a female geisha (performer) 女芸者の絵” with a corollary:

*Curved soles are fine, but keep a corner clean:  
Pony geta too round tumble too easily, I mean*

丸くとも一ト角あれな駒下駄のあまりまろきはころびやすきに 蜀山人歌集  
maruku to mo hito-kado are na komageta no amari maroki wa korobi yasuki ni shokusanjin  
round even one corner be-let! pony-geta too round-as-for tumble easier though

*Round they are but there is a corner still on pony geta  
Were they rounder yet she'd roll over even betta!*

In the original, Shokusanjin only alters the second poem from the Chikusai book by a few words in the middle, the “human heart” is changed to the beveled-front pony-geta worn by dancers whose *tumbling* was often deliberate, i.e., sleeping with a customer. The second reading assumes that the *amari*, or “too/excessive” in the vernacular was also used as an intensifier meaning “very,” and that this reading was *also* intended. Shokusanjin wrote many round/square poems, part of a “Praising Square Picture” 四角画の自賛 series, the best of which should be a saying: “*This is what I wish for the hearts/minds of all men! / A coin with a hole, round outside & square within*” (銭の賛 是を人の心ともがな銭の穴おもては丸くうらはは四角に 蜀山人歌集 *kore o hito no kokoro to . . .*).

かたふちにみをなけんとはおもへとも  
kata-fuchi ni mi o nagen to wa omoedomo  
gulch-into body+acc throw-would-as4 think but  
さすか命のおしきなるらん  
sasuga inochi no oshiki naruran  
what/why life's dear becomes+exclam

身をすてゝ諸国をめくる執行じやの  
mi o sutete shokoku o meguru shugyô ja no  
body/self+acc various countries+acc circle training  
何に命のおしきなるらん  
nani ni inochi no oshiki naruran  
what/why life's dear becomes+exclam

西行法師 by Monk Saigyô

女 by a Woman

*I think I'll just  
throw myself into a deep  
bend of the river*

*No, life is just too dear  
for me to let it end!*

*You who left  
yourself behind traveling  
for discipline*

*Why whine that 'life's  
too dear to let it end'?*

About Saigyô, Carter writes, “his consistent adoption of this guise of the reluctant recluse who has left the world but still finds himself drawn by it can be seen as one of Saigyô's major artistic accomplishments.” This pair of *kyôka* in Kasanu Sôshi (かさね草紙 tk2) brings out this contradiction and pokes fun at it. Like the Chikusai poems, it is probably 17c.

一斗のむ人だにあるを杯の 作法も知らぬ下戸のつたなさ 沸 齊  
*itto nomu hito dani aru o sakazuki no sahô mo shiranu geko no tsutanasa bussai* 17c 日本酒仙伝  
 one to(4.8 US gals) drinks/ing person/s even is/are !/while etiquette even knows-not teetotaler's' clumsiness

*To think there are Gallants who polish off kegs every night,  
 While totally clueless Teetotalers cannot get one cup right!*

~~~~~ #1 ~~~~~

*The wages of wine are a mistaken life – especially hideous
 For those who, drinking, pity us, know not they are piteous!*

one/whole life+acc. mistake/ing sake/wine's side-effect+emph.-as-for knowing-not likes person+emph. pitiful
isshô o ayamaru sake no toga zo to wa shira de konomeru hito zo hakanaki nakarai bokuyô 17c 同
 一生を誤る酒のとがぞとは 知らで好める人ぞ はかなき ト養 同

Tsutanasa means social clumsiness to the extent of being wretched and *hakanaki*, vain in the sense of being hopelessly short-lived. The above and what follows is a good part of the double chapters *A Mad Dissing Debate: Drinker vs. Teetotaler* 上 and 下 in the 740-page monster. It was netted from a “drink culture” website while googling the physician-poet Bokuyô (1607-78). Infuriated at another poet, Bussai's 10-point counting-song 数え歌 attack on teetotalers, he retaliated point by point against heavy-drinkers. The originals are more similar than the translations as all start with the numbers 1-10, respectively, and end in adjectives. Here is #3:

三三の九度の固めの始まりは 神代も今も酒にこそあれ
sansan-no-ku-do no katame no hajimari wa kami yo mo ima mo sake ni koso are
 three-three's nine times' hardening's start-as-for gods' age and now wine-in esp. is

*Thrice thrice makes nine, man & woman bound by a vine —
 From the Age of the Gods to ours today all begins with wine.*

~~~~~ #3 ~~~~~

*Those who chew out those of us who choose not to drink —  
 Drunken by their own brew end up bums too drunk to think!*

horribly abstainers+acc scold drinker/s-as-for wine-by drunken end-up lives  
*sanzan ni geko o shikareru sakenomi wa sake ni nomarete hata su minoue*  
 三三に下戸を叱れる酒のみは 酒にのまれて果す身上

The marriage ceremony with its 3x exchange of drinks, *sando-shiki*, recapitulates the mythic quickening of the nation. *Three* is the Taoist foundation. *Vine* is obviously out of place for a rice-wine culture. *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea culpa!* Bokuyô uses the 三 character where it is usually not used, for an adverb meaning *thoroughly*, and appeals to a proverb about how drink comes to *drink us* for his feisty rebuttal. And #4:

四海波目出度などと歌へども 不吉に見ゆるげ孤の顔付  
 shikai nami medetai nado to utaedomo fukichi ni miyuru geko no kaotsuki bussai  
 4-seas waves cheerful/hurrah etc singing but, unlucky-as appear teetl'r's face-expression

*We sing Four Seas, to celebrate waves meeting at our place  
 What bad luck to have to see a teetotaler's lonely face!*

~~~~~ #4 ~~~~~

*The upright man, even his good character floating in a cup
 reflects the ugliness of not knowing when enough is enough.*

四かるべき其人がらも杯に 向へば変わる人の面影 bokuyô
 shikarubeki sono hitogara mo sakazuki ni mukaeba kawaru hito no omokage
 proper that personal-character even sakecup-to face-when changes person's face

In #4, Bussai replaces the 戸 character in *geko* 下戸 teetotaler (lit. low-gate) with 孤, meaning *solitary* or *lonesome*. Bussai's #5, which we shall skip, kids about how just a sip on the five main festivals leaves *geko* pale and faint. While Japanese who drink little for philosophical (Confucian sobriety) or health (alcoholism) reasons could be called *geko*, so could those who refrained because of the alcohol intolerance that, to varying degrees, afflicts almost half of Japanese. They were indeed pitiful in a society where drink was socially de rigor. We can imagine poem #5 infuriated Bokuyô, who, as a doctor, knew only too well how hard it was on the weak. Here is his retaliatory #5, followed by Bussai's telling #6:

五無理とは口に言へど嬉しさを 包みかねた意地の汚さ ト養
 go-muri to wa kuchi ni iedo ureshisa o tsutsumikaneta iji no kitanasa bokuyô
 honorific(you)/5-as4 mouth-by say-but glee cram-in-cannot pushiness' dirtiness

*They may say, "Please do not overdo it!" But filthy Glee
 is what we see when drinkers push drinks on you and me!*

~~~~~

*They make everything so damn difficult, then, most turn tail  
 on us drinkers, those stinkers, non-drinkers' brains are stale!*

difficultly twisting-returning, heavy-drinkers-to rear+acc show teetotalers! many  
 muzukashiku nejikaeritaru jôgo ni wa ushiro o misetaru geko zo ôkaru bussai  
 六かしくねじ返りたる上戸には うしろを見せる下戸ぞ多かる

*Stinkers and stale brains* may exceed the limit of poetic license, no comments are needed for either of the above. Bokuyô's response to #6 points out that most good-for-nothings are punch-drunk; they got that way beating themselves with too many stiff ones. 六でなき人ときいては大方に 酒で身をうつたぐひ多さよ *rokudenaki hito to . . . Plainer than my metaphor, most of the wit is in the initial pun incorporating the number six – Issa's*

later use of the same *rokudenashi* good-for-nothing to describe *himself* in a properly self-deprecatory yet comic fashion on his sixtieth birthday (*i.e.*, New Year's) is better. Without the puns both are not worth translating.

十分の上にも酒は飲めません 餅の過ぎたる後は 食傷 沸齊  
*jûbun no ue ni mo sake wa nome mo sen mochi no sugitaru ato wa shokushô bussai*  
 enough beyond even sake-as4 drink even do-would sweetrice surpassing after as4 cloy

~~*Feeling full, we cannot drink more when it comes our turn;  
 But after over-eating sweet-rice cake, look out heart-burn!*~~

*Having had enough, a drinker would drink more sake yet;  
 With sweet-rice cake, overeat and sick of it is all we get!*

~~~~~ #10 ~~~~~

*Drinking until full, and then some, decimates a man inside;
 Done over and over, it leaves you no body in which to hide!*

enuf beyond evn aftr continue ske-drinkng-as4 oft repeatd-if aftr-as4 internal-damage
jûbun no ue ni ato hiku sakenomi wa dô kasanareba ato wa naisan bokuyô
 十分の上に跡ひく酒のみは 度重なれば後は内損 ト養

My first reading of “food-wounds” in Bussai’s poem was *heart-burn*, but checking the OJD found it was *getting cloyed* or *tired of something*, in which case, the ambiguous *nome mo sen* had to be positive (drinking-do-would) rather than negative. Note that the web-site with the debate wrongly – but, all too typically – assumed these 17c poets were Shokusanjin’s contemporaries, thus crediting Tenmei (late-18c) *kyôka* for it.

神々は出雲の国へ寄ると聞く
 貧乏神ばかり何故ここにをる
kamigami wa izumo no kuni e yoru to kiku
binbôgami baka naze koko ni oru edo3

怠け者の貧乏をかこちて

Lazy Bones Complains

*With all the gods
 gathering in Izumo,
 or, so they say,*

*What I do not know is why
 Poverty's still here, today!*

酒は飲む博奕はこくし朝寝する
 仕方なければ定宿にする
sake wa nomu bakuchi wa kokushi asane
-suru shikata nakereba teijû ni suru

貧乏神の答へて

God Poverty Explains

*I drink my wine
 gamble away what's mine,
 and sleep till noon.*

*Tell me, does it look like
 I can afford to leave soon?*

A gloss of this netted pair of *dôka*, or didactic *kyôka*, probably 18-19c Edo, was not needed as, aside from the rhymes (today/soon), the translations closely match the original. While the idea of responding to the anomaly of the God remaining in town in Gods-gone Month is clever, the poem insults the all hard-working paupers. Of course, there are the lazy, spoiled and rotten poor, but because successful creators (and those who steal from them) tend to *become* wealthy, wealth is credited, *ipso facto* for everything, and few realize that not only labor is done by the poor but most creative work.

四十からはおいの中にぞ入りにける 若狭にかへる道が知りたい Rokube etc.
 Youth: *shijûkara wa oi no naka ni zo irinikeri* • Old man: *wakasa ni kaeru michi ga shiritai*
 chickadee-as-for (travel)casket-within+emph. went • wakasa-to return road-the know-want
 forty-as-for old-age-within+emph entered • youthfulness-to return road/way-the know-want

Young man to old pilgrim

*A chickadee
 has gone into your
 travel casket*

Old pilgrim to young man

*So, please let me ask it,
 The way back to Wakasa!*

Young man to old pilgrim

*From age forty
 Sir, you're on the road
 to being old*

Old pilgrim to young man

*If so, I shall be so bold
 To ask the way back to youth!*

In Japanese, one reading suffices. Unless the target language has a pun with a matching story, a composite reading is the best that can be hoped for. Hiroaki Sato, who gives only the left-hand reading, called it one of “two episodes showing how *renga* in its pristine form may have been composed.” (*One Hundred Frogs*: 1983) He takes it from link-verse scholar Fukui Kyûzô (1867-1951), who heard it from his mother. To sum, the youth saw the old man stopped at a fork in the road and, noting what the chickadee did, “gave it a moment’s thought, then looked quite pleased with himself. He said to himself, ‘Isn’t this fun!’ and loudly to the pilgrim: “*A chickadee has gone into the travel casket*”. . .” Then, the pilgrim, pretending to refuse to cap the verse, asked “*I’d like to know the road to Wakasa*.” “At this, the young man clapped his hands and delightedly exclaimed, ‘*That’s it! That’s it! Now we have a wonderful renga!*’ ” Sato’s prose translation is beautiful, but his reading of the poem – “the young man, presumes that the sight of a chickadee going into a travel casket fuels the desire to go home” – does not warrant that young man’s excitement. *How* did Sato miss it? He *also* writes “*The relative*

independence of each part is vital because in linked poetry the sense of linking must be maintained and that is greatly enhanced by the element of unexpectedness in transition,” and that “the pilgrim’s response is accidental.” Was Sato so intent on the anticipated surreal disjunction that he missed the obvious puns? There was a tell-tale speed-bump that should have slowed him down. The pilgrim’s home-town was *not* Wakasa, but Obama. Wakasa may be on the way to Obama, but *there is no reason for a second name to be brought into the poem if not for the pun.*

Puns on the name of the bird and town both go back hundreds of years and a pun on the latter is even attributed, possibly falsely, to Izumi Shikibu (c.970-1030). It is hard to say when the poem was first composed but it is found in various versions embedded in various narratives – some have the one poet giving both parts of the poem, neither deliberately, but rather found by the listener – so chances are it goes back at least to the early-16c hey-day of popular stories called *kanazôshi*, as they often had poems embedded. Sato thought of it as a prototype for “pristine” link-verse (*haikai-no-renga*). Perhaps. But, it is so clearly comic that I prefer to consider it a sort of capped *kyôka*, though this is not a form that anyone, to my knowledge, has ever recognized. There are clearly dated examples of the same to be found in Cranston’s waka anthologies. My favorite:

小夜更けて今はねぶたくなりけり+夢に逢ふべき人や待つらん 拾遺集
sayo fukete ima wa nebutaki narinikeri + yume ni aubeki hiyo ya matsuran emperor murakami
 small-night deepening now-as-for tired become/became +dream-in meet-ought person/s waiting! sis #1183

宵に久しう大殿籠らで、仰せられける 天曆御製
 his majesty came up with this when he stayed up late

*The night grows
 late, somehow drowsiness
 has found me:*

*It grows late
 and I fear We are now
 growing sleepy:*

御前にさぶらひて、奏しける
 serving in his presence, she offers

*Could this be the reason why –
 Someone’s waiting in a dream?*

*Could someone be waiting
 for my Lord in his dreams?*

“She” is the “Shigeno handmaid.” The two-person, *i.e. capped*, poem is one in an extraordinary *Shûishû* (c.1005) mini-chapter with six *tan-renga*, or “short-linked verses,” all introduced and translated by Edwin Cranston (*Waka Anthology* v2a). The *drowsiness* and the entire reply on the left are borrowed from him. The Japanese original has no pronouns but, translated,

can easily bear several. The first reading, after the original and Cranston, keeps them to a minimum (just *me*), making it possible to read the poem as a one-person opus, as it could be in Japanese were the prefaces removed and both parts united. The second reading borrows the royal “We” from English and lets the 14-syllabet cap differ. Japanese once held that people in dreams appear by *their* – not just the dreamer’s – volition. The hand-maid went a step further, supposing would-be dream-callers could make us tired when they are kept waiting! Cranston conservatively calls it “slightly wittier” than the poem preceding it, another exchange where 10c Emperor Murakami gets the cap, but unless an antecedent for the idea of *dream-callers-waiting-bringing-sleepiness* can be found, the poem, thanks to the hand-maiden’s contribution, is a conceptual *masterpiece*, and deserves to be famous (“deserves to be” because it is not). And it is followed by another (SIS #1184) more clever if less conceptually interesting exchange dating to the reign (833-50) of Ninmyô hundred years earlier. I was tempted to introduce it in full, but the animal-hours and the punning requires a considerable introduction and I have borrowed enough from Cranston. Let me just say it was included in the *Tales of Yamato* (大和物語 #168), credited to Yoshimune no Munesada, soon monk, then Archbishop Henjô, who famously fell on maiden flowers (pg.181), and the complexity of the puns foreshadow those in later *kyôka*. When the woman complains he failed to meet her in the hour of the cow, *ushimitsu*, punfully *miserable* (*ushi*), he replies he dozed off in the hour of the *rat*, *ne*, homophonous with *sleep*, because he wanted a dream preview. The original puns are Shakespearean in their artlessness and I must confess it great fun to see Cranston’s heroic efforts to save them. His ‘*drat it all*’ for the rodent is as mad as anything in this book and suggest he is in fine form for upcoming volumes which hopefully will include many more wild waka.

春はもえ秋はこがるる竈山・霞も霧も煙とぞ見る 清原元輔 拾遺集 #1180
haru wa moe aki wa kogaruru kamadoyama · kasumi mo kiri mo keburu to zo miru motosuke
 spring-as-for smolders fall-as-for burns oven-mountain // mist and fog smoke-as+emph appear
 筑紫へまかりける時に竈山のもとに宿りて侍けるに道つらに侍ける本に古く書き付けて侍ける

Heading to Tsukushi, spending the night at the foot of Mt Kamado,
 a tree was found where someone had long ago carved these words:

*Smoldering in spring,
 Charring dark in the fall,
 Cookstove Mountain:*

元輔 e.c. tr.
 Motosuke

*Vernal haze, autumnal mist,
 Both look like smoke from here.*

*Smoldering in spring
 And burning through the fall,
 Our great Mt Stove!*

元輔 r.d.g.
 Motosuke

*Fine mist and fog, equally
 Look just like smoke to me!*

Sei Shônagon's father Kiyohara Motosuke (908-990) was on his way to what is now Kyûshû to assume the governorship when this supposedly happened. *Supposedly*, because Cranston, whose translation is the more responsible reading on the left, points out that another account has it as a single poem by another man. It makes much more sense as dead-cap link-verse (just made up that term for a poem by a dead man finished by a live man). Cranston notes the "predictable plays" on "budding/burning" (*moe*) and "roasting red" (*kogaruru*) and opines that idea-wise, Motosuke in 986, "simply added smoke." At a risk of being too obvious, I would call it *masterful buffoonery* for a man in a high position to assume the persona of a hayseed, countering lyrical rustic trope (the *smoldering* usually applies to new shoots of delicate young herbs and the burning the beautiful maple foliage of fall) in the 17-syllabet verse with a plain, 'Dunno, looks-like-smoke-to-little-ole-me!' 14-syllabet verse that better fits the name of the mountain to boot. Evidently, Sei Shônagon didn't fall far from the tree.

色好みあつぱれそなたは日本一 松意・蛍をあつめ千話文をかく 一鉄 談林十百韻 648-9
irogonomi appare sonata wa nippon ichi matsui • hotaru o atsume chiwabumi o kaku ittetsu
 color/eros-liking hurrah! you-as-for japan one! • fireflies+acc. gathering bawdy-tales+acc write

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Bravo to you!</i> | <i>When it comes to</i> | <i>When it comes to love</i> |
| <i>So gloriously horny,</i> | <i>being horny, you're #1</i> | <i>& loving it, you're the one</i> |
| <i>Nippon Ichi!</i> | <i>in all Japan</i> | <i>the primo of Japan</i> |
| +++++ | +++++ | +++++ |
| <i>Gath'ring fireflies in pails</i> | <i>Gath'ring those fireflies</i> | <i>Gath'ring fireflies to write</i> |
| <i>To write your dirty tales.</i> | <i>to write your dirty tales!</i> | <i>dirty tales is quite a scam!</i> |

This is what might be called a *found kyôka*, comprising two verses from different poets snipped from a 16c *haikai no renga*. Such a link-verse sequence is an exchange, but more complex than a cap. Before explaining *why*, a word on *fireflies*. They were popular enough a theme to boast multiple tropes including 1) use by poor but diligent scholars for reading in the summer – as snow was piled by the window to reflect moonlight in the winter – an idea from China, as Japanese were more likely to make such a lantern for night-crawling, *i.e.*, calling on a lover; 2) symbolizing the ephemeral, as the light is faint, unsteady and soon gone, evoking our tenuous hold on life, or the lover so wretched s/he thinks of death; 3) a plaintive (small and in the dark) symbol of ardent longing, as burning within was linked to desire by the *hi* pun (*hi* in *omohi* and *kohi*); 4) the *butt* of jokes, for having lights on that part of their anatomy. Now, what makes the above sequence from a 1675 Ôsaka Danrin school link-verse jam so delightfully mad is that it replaces ancient passion with pure

horniness, something inspired by a preceding 7-7 verse of brightly blushing young lovers coming together. The “you” refers to *them* first, then, with the 7-7, becomes *he*, for we imagine a man writing dirty tales by firefly-light alone. Well, *not quite*. My “dirty tales” is a reading purposely bent for the pun on *tail*. *Chiwabumi*, properly written 痴話文, is a letter that spells out the desires of lovers. And, note how the implied light of the fireflies in the 7-7 verse, while making mad sense together with the previous 5-7-5, relates more directly to the previous 7-7 with blushing lovers. Because associations leap-frogged in this manner *as a rule* in the Danrin school, it is hard to harvest *kyôka* from the link-verse. Only exceptional links such as the above work, barely. So we have a paradox. The literature that may well have the most healthy mad *spirit*, yields the least easily harvested individual *kyôka*. Most *haikai* did flow directly from one stanza to another, but the ones with more closely linked associations generally had a 14-syllabet lead (*mae-ku*) and a 17 syllabet response. While *kyôka* (and *waka*) are usually the reverse, that matters less than the nature of the link, *i.e.*, whether or not it creates one 31-syllabet poem.

..

山里は寝られざりけり夜もすぐら松吹く風に驚かされて 新旧狂歌 俳諧聞書
yamazato wa nerarezarikeri yo mo sugara matsu fuku kaze ni odorokasarete “shikibu”
 mountain-town/home-as-for sleep-cannot night-through pine-blowing-wind-by surprised

*Mountain hollars! I couldn't fall asleep at all last night
 The wind in the pines brought me fright after fright.*

Shikibu had a child without a father and left it with a guardian sword in the Gojo area. Years later, she was enjoying a country outing and by chance ended up lodging at the house of the commoner who had found her daughter. The wind that night was strong and she composed the above poem. A little girl in the house overheard it and asked if she might compose a reply. Using the parroting method, she recited –

山里は寝ぬといへども寝ればこそ松吹く風に驚かされて 同双方ハ狂歌鑑
yamazato wa nenu to iedomo nereba koso matsu fuku kaze ni odorokasarete 賞辞典
 mountain-town/home-as-for sleep-not (you) say but sleeping-if pine-blowing-wind-by surprised

*This mountain hollar kept you awake? Forgive me if I scoff
 But to start at the wind in the pines one must first doze off.*

Shikibu was impressed and asked what sort of person she was. Hearing the whole story, she knew without doubt that the girl was her daughter. One story has it that she was the one who would later become known as Ko-Shikibu, or little Shikibu. (my loose and slightly abbreviated translation)

This Edo period fictional exchange found in the *Kyôka Appreciation Dictionary* is, in an odd way, convincing. Shikibu's supposed poem is more boring than any of her real *waka* and she was not stuck-up like the great comic diva of the miscellany Sei Shônagon, so the reader first thinks it far from authentic. But, that does not hurt the story at all, for it helps set up the girl's hyperlogical reply which does indeed perfectly mimic the rationalism of Shikibu, whose cleverness was clearly appreciated by the folk, as there are many tales about her.

..

Unlike the philosophical exchanges that tend to be translatable because of the highly conceptual content, the ordinary exchanges – exchanges of gifts and/or greetings – found in collections of *kyôka*, tend to be so full of word-play and short of plot as to approach nonsense. For example,

♪ *Shigure kyôka*. The earliest clear-cut *kyôka* playing on the expression “Gods-gone-month” I know is an ex-change recorded in the diary of Monk Sôchô (d.1532). Both poems are too ponderful to re-create, but the here is the gist of it: first, Takachika 小原兵庫頭(高親) replies to Sôchô's unrecorded letter: 神無月文も無益のことの葉の そむきがたくてかき絶にけり(宗長日記) *kaminazuki fumi mo muyaku no kotonoha no somukigatakute kakitaenikeri* —

*Gods=paper-gone month, letters are to no avail when leaves=letters fail;
It is hard to stop, but my writing=persimmon brush is gone.*

God/s puns with *paper* (*kami*), *persimmon* with *writing* (*kaki*) – I added “brush,” though unsure whether said variety (resembling the head of a large brush) already existed. Then, Sôchô wrote a reply to the reply: かきかはす愛もかしこも紙な月 文こそあらめ牛蒡大根 *kaki-kawasu koko mo kashiko mo kami-nazuki fumi koso arame gobô daikon* —

*Drying=persimmons=exchanging-letters, I, too, would be pleased to write little
In gods=paper-gone month: stamping's for ruffians, burdocks & big radishes!*

Fumi or letters may pun with *stamping down* hard when pulling edible burdock and daikon radishes. The former was just harvested, but the latter would grow and be pulled by *big louts* (the verb for “should not be,” *aramé*, is homophonous with such) all winter. Sôchô, who has many male-color poems, may also joke on what was in stock on the mountain, older men w/ thick-roots=*daikon*” and acolytes w/ thin ones, metaphorically burdocks (a boy with a large women, was said to “wash a burdock in the sea”). Note, too, that the pronunciation of the month, *kaminazuki*, was in the process of turning to *kannazuki*, thus killing the paper (*kami*) pun. I would guess such ubiquitous puns have played a larger role in Japanese than rhyme in English to help retain old spellings and pronunciations longer than they would have otherwise.

It should be obvious why such an exchange had to be relegated to the notes of the 740-page *Monster*. With the *dandelion* we saw in this chapter, only the coincidence in the names – both the English and Japanese extremely interesting even if evocative of different metaphor – but the

above persimmons and whatnot would require a total makeover to turn into something readable in translation. In order to be able to offer the reader, say, half-a-dozen translations that are readable, it would be necessary to first find a hundreds of such exchanges and select from them for translatability rather than excellence in the original.

..

♪ **A Boring Note.** As your translator's sources were almost entirely books of *kyôka* (or poems by *haikai* poets recognized as *kyôka* by the *Broadview* editors), exchanges found elsewhere are under-represented. Probably, comic exchanges that are not officially *kyôka* or found in *kyôka* anthologies would be less dense with puns (closer to the *haikai* master Issa's *kyôka*) and, hence, somewhat easier to translate.

Moreover, there are probably Edo era capped *kyôka*, as opposed to dueling *kyôka*, out there, too. Unlike *haikai* link-verse finds, these capped *kyôka* would be intended as individual poems. Most are probably in stories of various types which your translator has not yet had the good fortune to find – or, rather, buy – but he *also* expects to eventually find a cache of *the real thing* produced when two good *kyôka* poets with interest in *haikai* spend time together or correspond frequently. If and when more are found, they may be appended to this chapter.

While putting together this chapter, it became clear that an entire book on poem exchanges would be interesting to write, but it could only be done with much more research and in the original language.

Chinese-style, or *Mad as a Rectangle*

Japanese is as bad for end-rhyme as it is good for puns. It is not the paucity of phonemes – Latin tongues rhyme all the better for it – but having all the grammatical indicators at the end of the words and the verb with its uniform tenses at the tail of the sentence. Nonetheless, some Japanese knew the joy of crisp end-rhyme through Chinese-style poems, most commonly 4-line and rhymed AABA, called 狂詩 *kyôshi*. The mad Zen monk Ikkyû's are the best known. The title of the following example is “Woman’s Yin” 女陰 and a rough gloss would be “*originally has mouth still no words / billion hair heads(individuals) guard round(nine?) pock(scar) / all group alive stray way place / million various buddhas leave body gate).*”

*gan rai yû kô ko mu gon
o yoku mo tô yô gan kon
i' sai shu jô mei to sho
jû man sho fu shu' shin mon*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 十 | 一 | 百 | 元 |
| 万 | 切 | 億 | 来 |
| 諸 | 衆 | 毛 | 有 |
| 仏 | 生 | 頭 | 口 |
| 出 | 迷 | 雍 | 更 |
| 身 | 途 | 丸 | 無 |
| 門 | 所 | 痕 | 言 |

MOUTHED FROM THE START SPEECHLESS STILL
MAN AND BEAST LOSE THEIR WAY ON THIS HILL
SCARIFIED HOLE GUARDED BY A HAIRY HOST
THAT BORE ALL BUDDHAS AND ALWAYS WILL!

~~~~~  
BOASTING YE FIRST MOUTH – DUMB NONE-THE-LESS  
A HOST OF HAIRY HONOR-GUARDS, FOR BUT A HOLE!  
MAN AND BEAST LOSE THEIR WAY AT THIS ADDRESS  
BIRTHPLACE TO ALL BUDDHAS — CAN YOU GUESS?

~~~~~  
THE VERY FIRST MOUTH, IT'S TOOTHLESS & DUMB.
AN ARMY OF HAIR GUARDS A PIT BY THE BUM!
IT GUIDES US HERE, THEN HELPS MEN GET LOST;
YET OUT OF THIS GATE OUR BUDDHAS ALL COME.

The *sound* of this *kyôshi* may be a bit off as it was not provided by any book the author saw. Since Ikkyû belonged to the Five Mountain Temples 五山の寺院, one of the few enclaves in Japan noted for reading in the *ondoku* 音読 quasi-Chinese style which would vocalize the rhyme (『漢詩

の事典』大修館書店) one might think *all* books would supply it, but, *no*, they simply rewrite it in long-hand so to speak, as they might any piece of Chinese-style (*kanbun*) prose. “A Woman’s Sex” as John Stevens translates the title, does not start this chapter just to catch your attention, but because the ugly expression Stevens coyly translates as “*it?*” namely, the 丸痕 “*round scar*” or “*pock*” is out of character from a monk known to love women and, therefor, seems to be proof that end-rhyme mattered. Ikkyû *needed* that awful *kon*, or “scar” for the rhyme with *gon*, and brought in “round,” a word full of good meaning, to make amends. Or, 丸 *round* may be a cover for 九 *nine* (the hole that was slang for *it*) making a better rhyme yet for the “wordless” *mugon*: *kyukon* rather than *gankon*! Lest you think that improbable, observe that another poem of his clearly ciphers homosexual behavior 男色 (*male color*) as 勇巴 (*brave fat*). Regardless, the original seems a series of paradoxes in riddle form.

若衆天然好富貴・摺切争可入御意・無酒無茶無餅・山僧風流只文字
 (寄少人三首の其三 一休ばなし 第四 “We” in the original is *mountain monks*.
 I follow one explanation of the second line which may well be wrong.)

YOUNG MEN LIVE FOR RICHES’ SAKE
 POVERTY’S RAGS ARE HARD TO TAKE
 WE HAVE NO TEA NO WINE NO CAKE
 WE ARE COOL 4 THE WORDS WE MAKE

The second line of the original Ikkyû poem above does not end-rhyme, but the translation lost an internal rhyme, so call it even Steven. One reason half a dozen of Ikkyû’s snappy Chinese-style rhymes were introduced in the 740-page *Monster* was because I felt pre-Tenmei Chinese-style mad-poems are unfairly denigrated by the only book my limited time and money allowed me to by on the subject of Edo era *kyôshi*. Here is what Hino Tatsuo and Takahashi Keiichi write about Ikkyû and *kyôshi*:

To say Ikkyû only wrote ludicrous *kyôshi* is to say that *kyôshi* was not yet worth calling literature (一休、単に滑稽の狂詩を作ったというだけでは、まだ文学と称するには足りない。) *Kyôshi* become literature when those who write them consciously choose this style or genre characterized by a critical attitude naturally born of a mismatch of form and content [the original uses the English “unbalanced”], and this play, as play, attains the heights of fine expression. (日野+高橋『太平楽府、江戸狂詩の世界』1991)

Granting *kyôshi* became popular entertainment in the late-18c largely due to young Ôta Nanpo’s genius – Is that reason to discredit Ikkyû, deny other old *kyôshi* and credit Ôta alone with taking hitherto *stiff* (堅苦しい) *regulation* (正規) Chinese poems (漢詩), boldly introducing slang (日本語

の俗語) and applying the form to vulgar matters (卑俗の素材)? Not without a thorough study of 1) old *kyôshi* in Japan by whatever name, for it is hard to believe Yûchôrô, Teitoku, Buson and other playful souls did not experiment with all-character poems; 2) Chinese poetry, to see just how ‘mad’ the Chinese *themselves* could be, and 3), how much Nanpo read of 1) and 2). Yet, Nanpo’s creativity and editorial sophistication may indeed lack precedent. H & T find *Professor Sleepyhead’s Anthology* (寝惚先生文集 1767), published when he was just nineteen, in a different class from others (eg. 桂井在高/古文鉄砲前後集/1761) and example the sort of novelty that inspired *kyôshi* as a real genre with the following poem. What it does, in short, is *play proverbs differently in each line*. The first points out that if “indigence dulls a man,” it increases the poor man’s handicap; the second splices a food proverb to an idiom for work; the third asks rhetorically if you’ve heard that one’s passage through Hades (purgatory) depends on money; the fourth reverses the proverb that work cures poverty. The allegedly revolutionary orthography and slang (eg. 喰うや), do not translate and the order and some other details differs, but –

為貧為頓奈世何
食也不食吾口過ぎ
君不聞地獄沙汰金次第
拵追付貧乏多

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT, DEPENDS ON WHAT WE EARN,
BUT IF INDIGENCE DULLS US, CAN A MAN EVER LEARN?
MOST OF THE TIME POVERTY OVERTAKES HARD WORK, OR,
HAVEN’T U HEARD? EVEN GOING TO HELL TAKES MONEY TO BURN!

because poor because dull not world what / eat-is not eat my mouth-passing=job /
you not hear hell sieve money-dependent / cliff chase catch poverty plentiful

The original is not the usual perfect rectangle and the rhyme is hard to pin down. As Nanpo had a natural sense with words, he could still make it scan. All the translator can do is his damndest, though the result makes little more sense than the word-for-word gloss, which is close to worthless (sorry). One thing is certain. Nanpo’s play with proverbs and idioms may not always translate but it is contagious. This translator found himself suddenly coming up with lines like “Your money or your afterlife!” and new aphorisms, following proverbs such as the one about Hell, above:

*RICH MEN CANNOT BE KEPT DOWN BUT THEY CAN GET LOST;
IF YOU ARE POOR, PEOPLE ALWAYS TELL YOU WHERE TO GO!*

Regardless, until the translator can examine a large number of *kyôshi* by Nanpo et al he cannot judge them, or make comparisons. Most of the examples in Hino and Takahashi's book strike him as either uninteresting or too long for comparison to *kyôka*. But he did find a couple interesting *kyôshi*, one in that book and one in another to share. Both are early-19c. The title of the chapter made for them in the 740-page Monster is *Blue Camels & White Swimmers: News in Character*. The former:

駱 駝 怨

一落山師手
日々見物多
却思野飼時
不食貧駱駝

THE BITTER BACTRIAN RAKUDA-EN

BOUGHT BY A MONTEBLANK UNFAIR,
DAY AFTER DAY, I SPIT, THEY STARE;
WHILE I DREAM OF THE SANDY MOOR
MY MASTER FEEDS ME LESS AND LESS:
NONE CARE ABOUT MY POOR CAMELOT!

The original is four lines & says "one-fall-mountain-master's-hand / day-day-audience-many / yet-think-field-raise-time / not-eat-poor-camel=poverty-ease

This rhyme-scheme is weak for a Chinese-style mad-poem but suitable for the subject. It is doubly bactrian: ABCB, i.e. a four-legged couplet and that rhyme extends two characters (~ *butsuta* / ~ *rakuda*). The title mimics standard trope of a "bitter courtesan." The last line takes the saying *kuwazu binraku* "if you don't eat, poverty's fun" and puns the *binraku*, poverty-ease, a slothful state of irresponsibility the wise prefer to the burdens of wealth, into the underfed *rakuda*, or camel. The poem grew a line in translation but thanks to "*Camelot* = camel lot," something of the style of the original wit survives translation. The content is another matter.

日本としをとるのがらくだかな 文政七 1824
nippon ni toshi o toru no ga rakuda (raku da) kana Issa
Japan-in year/age+acc take is/are easy/camel+exclam.

Growing old (passing the N.Y.) in Japan, why it's camels/easy!

どこでとしとつてもそちはらくだ哉 文政七 1824
doko de toshi totte mo sochi wa rakuda (raku da) kana
 where-at year taking+emph there-as-for camel/easy+exclam

Wherever they/we age, that is where they/we're camels/at ease!

These camels are in Issa's Journal. Both *kyôku* play on the homophonic meaning of the name *rakuda*. One is sweetly boastful and the other, which comes half a dozen *ku* later, exchanges that banal chauvinism for something better, a camel report that reads like an aphorism. These camels paraded from one major Japanese city to another in 1822 became famous not because of the punning name as one might imagine from the above, but as exemplars of what was at the time rare behavior. *To go camel*, so to speak, was for a husband and wife to walk together in public. So Issa's *ku* might *also* mean that they were *together*.

洋婦浴水海瀬邑
 真裸飛込形浮々
 胸張腹細尻又大
 恰似瓢筆之川流

WESTERN WOMEN BATHE BY THE SEA
 DIVING IN NUDE, A BUOYANT DREAM,
 FULL BREASTS, THIN WAISTS, BIG BUTTS
 LIKE GOURDS BOBBING DOWN A STREAM

看西洋婦人水浴 安閑坊主 狂詩大全 明治廿二

Other than “dream,” the translation follows the original, which has only one metaphor and poor end-rhyme but is worth introducing because the subject is rare. This may be the first metaphorical description of the secondary sexual characteristics of the Occidental woman, exaggerated in comparison to Far Eastern features. In 19c Europe, scientists boasted that full Caucasian figures demonstrated more highly developed sexual specialization than in the relatively unisex Amerindian or Mongolian races, proving a more advanced state of evolution. In Japan, large breasts were, rather, the mark of stereotypically bestial wet-nurses and large buttocks seen as a flaw on female beauty. Most appreciation for ample posteriors was homosexual. Youths with big white “salty” butts were pictured and poeticized! There were exceptions. The greatest graphic designer of all time, Hokusai, clearly favored big-butt women. But the general attitude was clearly anti-ass. Viz., a *Tokuwakago* 徳和歌後萬載集 (1785) *kyôka*:

さげ帯をみるにつけてもをたふくの衣がへ うき尻にぞ有ける 橘鈴也
sageobi o miru ni tsukete mo otafuku no koromogae ukijiri ni zo arikeru tachibana suzunari
 lowered belt+acc see adding even Otafuku's dress-changing woeful/floating-ass-by is+emph

♪ Otafuku, or Ugly A-Bun-Dance ♪

*Though she clearly wears her belt down low on dress-change day,
 Miss Plump-cheeks' sorry rump insists on floating up to play!*

Otafuku, though her name means *much luck* or *happiness*, has enormous cheeks which swallow up her clitoral nose and pinch her vulvic mouth. In other words, she is a *mask* – usually paired with Hyon-otoko, a man with his slightly twisted pursed lips puckered out so far as to appear phallic, she is hung on the wall – but *also* an ugly woman. To return to the bathers. The mid-19c date corresponds with reports of the popularization of swimming for health in Japan. Bifurcated swim-wear was probably considered *nude*.

~~~~~  
 As we must read other *waka* to better grasp what makes *kyôka kyôka*, we cannot get a good handle on *kyôshi* without reading related poems. The following poems from vol.4 of Blyth's *Zen and Zen Classics: Mumonkan* are not mad but simply epigrams. It is interesting that, despite having written an extraordinary essay on the significance of rhyme, pointing out why the arrow that killed Cock-robin had to be shot by the sparrow, etc., Blyth never tries to do it. That probably is because he had far too much to introduce to the world to slow down and work for a good rhyme. But, if he hoped someone with more time might later rhyme it, as far as this translator knows, it has not happened. Here are Cases XI and XIV, metaphorical and what-if descriptions of the brilliant monk Jôshû, in English rhyme, perhaps for the first time:

眼 流 星  
 機 掣 電  
 殺 人 刀  
 活 人 劍

趙 州 若 在  
 倒 行 此 令  
 奪 卻 刀 子  
 南 泉 乞 命

HIS EYES SHOOT STARS,  
 LIGHTNING'S HIS WORD.  
 A MAN-KILLING BLADE,  
 HIS LIFE-GIVING SWORD

HAD JÔSHÛ BUT BEEN THERE,  
 HE'D SNATCHED THAT KNIFE:  
 HOW DIFFERENT AN AFFAIR,  
 NANSEN BEGGING 4 HIS LIFE!

1. *His eye is a shooting star; / The movements of his soul are like lightning. / He is a death-dealer, / A life-giving sword.* 2. *If Jôshû had been there, / Everything would have been done the other way round. / He would have snatched away the knife, / And Nansen would have begged for his life.* Both R.H. Blyth tr.

The second line speaks to the speed and decisiveness of his thought, but how would people know that without *words*? And the rhyme was needed to make the poem snap like the original, a clear abcb, *i.e.*, broken couplet. The second and third lines of the second poem were switched, for not to do so would have lengthened the poem. But Blyth's 13-syllable second line – why one could kill or not kill a whole litter of kittens in that much time! (Nansen demanded a brilliant reply to a Zen question or the cat's life, the cat died because none of the disciples came up with anything, after which Jôshû, who had been absent, returned and hearing about what happened immediately put his shoe upon his head at which Nansen lamented that had he been there the cat would still be alive.)

X X X I I I

路逢劍客須呈  
不遇詩人莫獻  
逢人且說三分  
未可全施一片

SWORDMASTERS GET THE RIGHT O'WAY  
NO POET? KEEP YOUR POEM – SHUT UP!  
MEETING OTHERS, GIVE NO QUARTER;  
TELL 'EM THREE QUARTERS, AND STOP!

~~~~~  
MEETING A SWORD-MASTER, GIVE IN,
SEEING NO POET, HOLD YOUR BRUSH.
AND NEVER TELL ALL TO A STRANGER,
THREE QUARTERS IS MORE THAN ENUF.

If you meet a master-swordsman in the street, give him a sword. / If you meet an unpoetical man, don't offer him a poem. / When you meet someone, tell him three quarters, / Don't on any account let him have the other part. trans. R.H. Blyth

Blyth nodded. 須 may be a character in one famous sword, but *here* it is an adverb modifying “giving.” But that is of less importance to this book than the difference of length in the respective translations. Blyth's is two or three-times as long as the original. That is not to say a short translation adequately communicates the meaning. But it does not have to as that is what the stories do. As Blyth explains, the first two lines reflect a Chinese prescription to treat each person according to his “condition.” Fine. But if

you have read Sufi tales telling the same, you know even translated prose can be snappier than explanatory translations of poems. “The Verse,” as he calls it, is *not* merely a message, but a gem to be savored. Proof? *The final two lines are now in all the proverb dictionaries.* To maintain that aphoristic quality a translator must re-create rather than explain. The last of this sampling is not called the “verse” but the commentary for Case #34, *Nansen’s No Way*.

南 泉 可 謂
老 不 識 羞
纔 開 臭 口
家 醜 外 揚

然 雖 如 是
知 恩 者 少

OF OLD NANSEN, I LAMENT:
LOST TO SHAME, INDECENT
HE, OPENS HIS FOUL MOUTH,
‘COME INTO MY DIRTY HOUSE!’

THAT SUCH A MONK BOASTS
DEVOTEES IS OPEN TO DOUBT

*Nansen, growing old, was lost to shame. Just opening his stinking mouth,
he told others about the disgrace of his own house. However. we must say
that few are grateful for it.* trans. by R.H. Blyth (in *Mumon* . . .)

For those who did not read the preceding chapters, Blyth introduces the eccentric Zen priest, his *dramatis persona*, like this: “*Nansen is the chap who loved his teaching more than cats.*” Now *that* is poetic! But, as always, his translation is a gloss on the original that only serves as a splendid foil to show how much work it took to create something that scanned, or in this case, squared.

♪ *Quality Poems Wanted.* Though translated as freely, or madly, as Ikkyû’s paradoxical Female Sex, Shokusanjin’s contradictory proverbs or Anonymous’ camel poem (a sort of sympathetic squib?), none of these *Mumon* poems seem as interesting as those *kyôshi*. Ikkyû and Chikamasa, with *kyôka*, managed to be truly comic, and Piet Hein with his grooks consistently did the same, so the didactic is not intrinsically boring. It would just seem that the genius required to make instruction witty is rare. But even the better poems I translated are not great. Your translator wants better stuff to work with. People with access to and the ability to read poems written in Chinese characters in real Chinese or Japanese (fake) Chinese are invited to submit interesting short (say 28-character limit?) poems for consideration.

Mad Death Poems, or *The Best Diers in the World*

宗鑑はどこへと人の問ならばちと用あってあの世へといへ 宗鑑 一萬集
sôkan wa doko e to hito no tou naraba chito yô atte ano yo e to ie sôkan d.1540
sôkan-as-for where-to people ask-if, 'a bit business is/having that world-to' say/tell[them].

*If anyone asks
where old Sôkan went,
you can just say
“He had some business
in the other world.”*

This, the first of the death poems 辞世, literally *words for the world* in the 19c *Kyôka Ichiman-shû* is, with Saigyô's *waka* wishing to die below a cherry in full bloom under a full moon and Bashô's *ku* about wandering the withered moor, among the three most famous death poems. It is in the first major *kyôka* collection (*Savage* 1666 どこはどちらだ), and many others. It is even good in translation without rhyme or pun. As laughing off one's death is the ultimate proof of good character and many Japanese had it, many if not most poems written for dying are delightfully mad.

*How striking
when you see them from
outside Creation
earth & sky aren't worth
even a box of matches!*

けんこんの外よりうち見れば火打ち箱にも足らぬ天地 布施弥次郎
kenkon no soto yori uchi mireba hiuchi-bako ni mo taranu ametsuchi fuse yajirô
cosmos' without-from emph.=strike see-if fire-strike-box-to even suffice-not heaven-earth

This death-poem from Yoel Hoffmann's *Japanese Death Poems* reflects a near-death experience the first time undated “warrior” Fuse Yajirô thought he would die. A literally *striking* (*uchi*) emphatic primes us for the match-box to come foreshadowed by the initial “cosmos,” *kenkon*, short for a cosmic box *kenkon-no-hako* 乾坤の箱 (the lid, *heaven*, bottom *earth*) vision of creation. If the original was written in phonetic syllabary, the *kenkon* might *also* pun with *genkon*, what is *right before one's eyes*. The poem's attitude may *seem* pedagogical, but the prevalence of larger metaphors such as lightning-striking in death poems, makes something as humble as personal fire-making equipment (not quite matches: see pg. 124) novel.

*Hardly striking when seen from without when I didn't die:
Not worth a fire-making box, they were, the earth and sky!*

Hoffman, who did not mention the largely untranslatable wit of the above poem, chased it down with the words “*However strange it may seem, many poets chose to end their lives with a satirical poem,*” and followed that with a string of *kyôka* of which the first was the following by Bashô’s painting teacher and haikai student Kyoriku (1656-1715),

*‘Til now I thought
for sure, dying was something
for nincompoops
When talents die, though fewer,
I’ll bet we make better manure!*

今までは下手が死ぬぞとおもひしに上手も死ねば糞上手かな 許六 -1715
ima made wa heta ga shinu zo to omoishi ni jôzu mo shineba kuso jôzu kana kyoriku
now-‘til-as4 incompetents die+emph thought but competents too die-when good shit!

The *manure* is from Hoffman. Your translator was so delighted to find him picking up on the wit that he himself neglected another reading which is actually the main one: *shit=kuso* is synonymous with *fertilizer*; but, *first*, an *emphatic adverb*, like “*damn!*” i.e., “when we talents die, we’re *damn* good at it.” Can anyone combine the following nuance and manure?

*I always thought dying was just something the untalented do
but when a man of talent dies . . . we’re good at dying, too!*
~~~~~  
*‘Til now I thought that this dying was beneath a man of parts  
but when we die we are still the ones who do it with art!*

Not to take one’s own death gravely is the ultimate act of a wise man and a wise guy. In my opinion, most of the best death poems come from *haikai* and are *kyôku*. Hoffman introduces my favorite, by Kasei (d.1859-2-2), a kabuki “artist” (actor?):

灰に成る名残も灸の二日哉 歌成  
*hai ni naru na-nokori mo kyû no futsuka kana*  
ashes-as become name-leftover+emph moxa’s second day

*I, too, will turn  
into ashes and leave my mark  
this second day.*

Dying on a day when moxabustion was ritually endured for good health, he equated his ashes with used *moxa* and hinted at a memento/scar. *Kyôka* are more complex, but this natural marriage with the world – the seasonal link – even in death makes haiku eternal.

碁なりせばこうをたてても生くべきに死ぬる道には手もなかりけり 本因坊算砂  
 go nariseba kô tatete mo iku beki ni shinuru michi ni wa te mo nakarikeri honin-bô sansa  
 go(game) is-if koh making live ought though dying path-for as4 a move evn not+emph 1558-1623

*If this were go  
 I could set up some koh  
 and stay alive*

*But, going down death's road,  
 I haven't found one good move.*

The poet was a great go-master. *Go* beats *chess* hands down as the world's premier intellectual game; our ignorance of it proves the West has yet to treat the far East seriously. *Kô* is a move, or rather a series of moves, more satisfying than any other board game move. One must play *go* decently to appreciate it, but let me try to explain. A stone that has just taken another to occupy a space as the first step to taking more stones or a larger space cannot in the very next move be retaken in a symmetrical play. If the taken side would retake that stone and fill in that vulnerability, thus preventing the other from making the aggression a *fait accompli* with a subsequent move, it must place a stone somewhere it could inflict heavy damage if not immediately taken. These *kohs* may go on and on like a tennis game where neither player can manage to win two points in a row.

ほつくりと死なは脇より火を付けて あとはいかいになして給はれ 宗朋  
 p/hokkuri to shinaba waki yori hi o tsukete ato haikai ni nashite tamuware sôbô p.1666  
 sudden[hokku]ly die-if underarm[waki]-from fire+acc set, after hai[ashes]kai-as make+polite

*If I should up &  
 die, mates, use the hair  
 below my arms  
 for kindling: Set me afire  
 turn me into pure haikai!*

*If I should pass  
 away tonight, just light  
 me armpit first,  
 & what is left you might  
 sell to the ash-man*

a haikai master's deathbed  
 俳諧師なれば臨終に

Let my death be *hokku*  
 &, when I go in a blink,  
 Be my Second, cap me  
 w/ a *waki*, light my fire:  
 Turned to ash, I shall be  
 Off upon my last *haikai*!



Hair is not mentioned, but if you recall the *Manyôshû waka* about *mowing* a man's armpit, it is clearly the tinder in this untranslatable *kyôka* with not only *hokku*, the lead-off *ku* in link-verse from the honored guest, but *tsuke*, i.e., *tsuke-ku*, or seconding *ku* by the *waki* or second, usually the host, and *haikai* punned into the text, itself ambiguous. The translator favors punning the penultimate 7 as “*ato wa ikai ni*,” where *ikai* means “big” or “many” and, idiomatically, *lots of work for you guys, thanks!* (i.e., お世話になり) but his respondents favor *ato haikai ni nashite*, punning *ato*, *hai ni nashite*, or “afterward, (I/it) become/s ashes.” *Haikai* may also pun as a *derelect* to be thrown away 廃壊 and the *ash-man* 灰買, who would be perfect here if there is a chance the *nashite(becoming) tamuware* is *dashite (putting out or selling) tamaware*. A handwritten な and た are damn close and such would surely make a good mad ending! However, as my respondent argues, the idea of making the poet's life *becoming=nashite haikai* includes the nuance of putting it *into* a linked sequence, not tossing it out. That would bring out the endlessness of *haikai*, which is, after all, homophonous with *wandering*.

来山は生れた咎で死ぬるなり それで恨みも何もかもなし 来山 63歳 1716  
*raizan wa umareta toga de shinurunari sore de urami mo nanimo ka mo nashi raizan*  
 raizan-as4, born offense-from die-am/becoming that-from grudge+emph anythingatall not

*Raizan has died  
 to pay for the mistake  
 of being born:  
 for this he blames no one,  
 and bears no grudge.*

tr. Yoel Hoffman

*Raizan is dying:  
 call it his punishment  
 for being born.  
 The fault is his, he leaves  
 in peace. Don't mourn!*

& my paraverse

Hoffman's original justifies left. Other readings, closer to Hoffman's than the above with its added advice, were dropped because his “*pay for the mistake*” is brilliant. *Toga* is an offense, not necessarily criminal but likely to incur punishment. A hang-over would be the wages of the *toga* of overdrinking, inability to become enlightened the *toga* of being a woman (according to many Buddhist sects). This is *misbehavior* or *karmic sin*, i.e. a *fault*, perhaps, but not *mistake*, yet making it that infinitely improves the poem. When something works that well, rhyme is moot.

生くること難しと知れど死すること また易からず思ほゆるかな 良寛  
*ikuru koto muzukashii to shiredo shisuru koto mata yoikarazu omowayuru kana ryôkan*  
 living thing difficult knowing but die-doing thing also easy-not think-can 19c

*Living is hard, that I already knew – but dying, too  
 I've come to know, is not an easy thing to do!*

Hoffman put Ryōkan with the haiku poets rather than the monks because he was a well-known poet, and gave his haiku death-poem. He was better known for 31-syllabet poems. The good man recorded long – should we say *running*? – battles with the trots. Outhouses must have made it sheer torture. Both his poem and Raizan’s boast no more than a touch of paradox, but it suffices to make them comic and, besides, the absence of death poems in ancient *waka* anthologies makes them *kyōka* by default.

再現 笑ひくさ残さんよりもつね／＼に挾持おきつれ今はくもなし 十口 69歳  
*waraigusa nokosan yori mo tsunezune ni kyōji okitsure ima wa ku mo nashi jikko 1791*  
 laughngstock leave-would rather thn always keepng have now-as-4 pain=(hai)ku+emph. not!

*Rather than leave a poem that people would laugh at I wrote  
 this one early and set it aside, so now I can die – composed.*

Hoffman gave the fine death-*ku* Jikko came up with, perhaps because “he had already paid due respect to tradition” by preparing the above *kyōka* he claimed to have heard somewhere, but probably wrote himself to cap a prose piece on death-poems. The original ends a bit differently than the above reading: “now, I have no *ku*!” where *ku* = *pain* = 苦 &/or *haiku* = 句 and probably means *no more ku to have to think up*. Your translator feels this *kyōka* ought to be famous and easily googled, but actually it is so obscure the original Japanese could not be found that way!

祝の心を 鶴もいや亀もいや松竹もいや ただの人にて死ぬぞめでたき 四方赤良  
*tsuru mo iya kame mo iya matsu take mo iya tada no hito nite shinu zo medetaki yomo no akera*  
 crane even yuck, turtle even yuck, pine bamboo even yuck: person-as die+emph.! joyful 1749-1823

*A crane? Not me!  
 Turtle, pine or bamboo  
 Not for eternity!*

*A crane? Yuck!  
 A turtle? Yuck! Pine, bamboo  
 Yuck, yuck, too!*

*To live & die a human  
 Is reason to be happy!*

*I think I’ve luck enough  
 if I can but die a man!*

~~~~~  
*Who would be a crane or turtle, bamboo or pine tree?
 To get to die as just a guy is good enough for me.*

Whether or not we believe humanity a condition for enlightenment or going to heaven, most of us *know* we are lucky to be human. In this sad age full of vain souls wishing for long lives not to accomplish things but simply to live, where fighting wars or the crab of cancer makes one a “hero” while dying for one’s art or to further learning makes one a fool, a poem challenging longevity as the ultimate value is invaluable. The bamboo is somewhat anomalous as it is usually not held to live

particularly long and identified with the age of one lifetime, 50-years, from the average number of joints. However its joints *also* symbolized generations and reigns. The original, by the king of Tenmei *kyôka*, Ôta by whatever a.k.a., is ambiguous with respect to being “just a human” or an average man, as opposed to a noble.

つる九百九十九ねんめ亀九千九百九十九あゝ尚齒会 蜀山百首
tsuru kyûhyaku-kyûjûkyû nenme kame kyûsen-kyûhyaku-kyûjûkyû aa nao ha-kai
 crane 999th year-on turtle 9,999th aah, still tooth-meeting(pre-death eulogy-party)

*Nine hundred ninety-nine for crane & turtle nine thousand plus the same
 Years pass and still they blubber – Alas, he will not have another!*

Death is relative. To reverse a Piet Hein grook on catching trains without being vexed – in the end, you’ll always make your last year and miss the next. The original’s “tooth-meeting,” (*ha-kai* 齒会), is a social gathering to fill up on laughs to hold grief at bay while toasting one *soon to depart* this world. The bathetic words and rhyme substitute for that perfect word. The general idea of death *at any age* being something to regret was hinted at in a 1752 *Mutamagawa zappai*, and repeated shortly after Shokusanjin wrote his poem by a *Yanagidaru senryû*, respectfully:

ninety-nine-at died-life even pitiful is
kyûjuku de shinuru inochi mo aware-nari
 九十九で死ぬる命もあはれ也 無玉四

‘Tis still a pity, though a life may end at nine and ninety!

~~~~~  
*One year can be cause for much regret: death at ninety nine*

九十九で死んで一年をしがられ 柳拾九  
*kyûjuku de shinde ichi-nen oshigarare*  
 ninety-nine-at dying, one year regretted

But this is not so much age as failing to reach that magical number of 100. Only the *kyôka*, putting 99 next to 999 and 9999 treated true relativity.

わんざくれ ふんばるべいか 今日ばかり明日は烏がかつ齧るべい 山中源左衛門  
*wanzakure funbaru beika kyô bakari ashita wa karasu ga kakkajiru bei yamanaka genzaemon d.1645*  
 (desperate words) struggle(hold out)do=dialect? today only tomorrow-as-4 crows-the emph+munch is=dial.

“ *Wanzakure! Funbaru bei ka!* ”

*Make my day! Bring it on today, boys – I can hardly wait!  
 Watch me fall upon my blade: tomorrow, crows, don’t be late!*

This was spoken or written on the day Yamanaka Genzaemon had to commit *seppuku*. Usually, the condemned made a bit of a show of cutting his belly – not falling on the blade but literally spilling one’s guts – at which time his head was struck off by whoever had that honor, often a friend with a good arm. By doing oneself in, the condemned could keep his possessions from being confiscated, enabling his family to survive (Montaigne noted the same system in Spain in the time of Tiberius). This made untoward scenes rare, for a man would not want to risk upsetting the authorities. Genzaemon either had no family or just didn’t give a damn. Psychologist Nada Inada marvels at this full-blown expression of the devil-may-care attitude, in-your-face cool bravado that would become identified with Edoites about a century later. This was no Socrates. Here is your first rebel without a cause: *gangster punk*. But, let us not wax romantic. This low-rank soldier of the palace guard was charged with neglecting his duty for years by feigning illness and behaving like a ruffian while spending his sick leave painting the town. Guts are always admirable, but it is too bad this exemplar of cool – the poem has been well-known for centuries – had to be a jerk who threw his weight around!

But, *damn*, the wording of that bad man Genzaemon’s mad poem is good! The flavor of the nitty-gritty servant-class Edo area dialect 六方詞 (*roppô-kotoba*) is so powerful, it even survives romanization. No even remotely close translation is possible, for Japanese, excepting a prefixed “shit” (not in this poem), does not rely on words like *God*, *damn*, *devil*, *bloody*; or *fuck*. It gets down in grammatical ways – call it *dirty grammar*, if you will. Still, we can get closer. If any reader can reproduce the dialect of a lower class 17c English soldier from whatever is the scrappiest part of greater London, please do another reading and send it to me!

食へばへる眠ればさむる世中に ちとめづらしく死ぬも慰み 白鯉館卯雲 徳和/萬載集  
*kueba heru nemureba samuru yononaka ni chito mezurashiku shinu mo nagusami hakurikan-bôun*  
 eating-if/when (grow)thin, sleeping if/when wake midnight-in somewhat rare dying even (a) relief 1785

♪ 辞 Leaving the World 世 ♪

*Eating makes me thin, and Sleeping keeps me up: Good grief!  
 So what in the World is odd about my calling Death relief?*

Most people eat and sleep to wake up fat (happy) and rested. That is enough to make what is real and sad paradoxical and, hence, comic.

---

Perhaps a double-digit percent of the scores of mad death poems I gathered here and there were in Yoel Hoffman’s 1986 book of *Death Poems*. Whether he knew it or not, he had more *kyôka* in it than any

anthology of Japanese poetry in translation at the time (since then, books of *surimono* published by art-book presses have Englished thousands more from the early-19c).

---

何事も皆偽りの世の中に 死ぬるといふぞ誠なりける 一休 ikkyû  
 nanigoto mo mina itsuwari no yononaka ni shinuru to iu zo makoto narikeru  
 anything even all falsehood/trick's world-in die that+emph. real/sincere is!

*In this world where everything's a sham, dying is real:  
 You can count on death, not to leave you on the lamb!*

---

*In this world, where nothing is for real, do not despair:  
 When your time comes to die, old Death will be there!*

---

*In this world where all is falsehood we must cling  
 to what we know: death, by god, is the real thing!*

---

*In this world of trickery and lying just one thing  
 Is sincerity itself: death and people dying.*

This *kyôka*, a perfect summation of what would be the attitude of the greatest Occidental death-positive poet, Emily Dickinson, is by the Zen monk Ikkyû (1394-1481) who, as we noted (pg. 153) carried a skull around on the New Year. It is not really a death poem. But it is a *kyôka* and about death. Here is one more that missed the 740-page monster:

玉の緒も馬の尾に似て切れぬればあはれこきうの音も聞えず 手柄岡持 c1800  
 tama no o mo uma no o ni nite kirenureba aware kokyû no oto mo kikoezu tegara no okamochi  
 gem/soul-string+emph horse-tail-like resembling, cut-if sad, fiddle=breath's sound+emph hear-not

*Souls are like horse tails stretched as far as they will go,  
 Until they part and we no longer draw breath or bow!*

Compared to Dickinson's boiling brains simmering down to a bubble and suddenly decapitated palms, etc., this is pretty tame. It is also funny in the original, where the *string* of the soul (a common idiom rather than metaphor) and *tail* are both "o" and *fiddle* and *breath* are both *kôkyû*. The best your translator could do was *draw* upon one common verb. Call it a half-witted reading.

♪ ***Fat and Happy?*** Damn right. Anyone can lose weight. One must, however, have properly functioning guts to gain it. If you can gain weight, you are lucky. If you are fat, don't feel sorry for yourself, but for the involuntary thin, who lack the freedom you may or may not exercise to shape your body.

# Bathetic Laments & Punderous Eulogies

岩戸破る手力もがも手弱き女にしあれば術の知らなく 万葉集 419 手持女王  
iwato yaburu tajakara mogamo teyowaki onna ni shi areba sube no shiranaku tamochi no ôkimi  
cavern door break arm-power wish-for arm-weak woman as am-if method know-not 8c

*How I wish for arms strong enough to bust the cavern door,  
But arm-weak woman that I am, can think of nothing more!*

~~~~~  
*Oh, to be Armstrong prying rocks away from caves, instead
An armweak woman! – How could I bring back the dead?*

Reading Japan's oldest anthology of poetry, the 8c *Manyôshû*, mostly standing in the train on my way to and fro work in early 1990's Tokyo, I found wit everywhere, much of which is, as far as I know, never thought comic by anyone but me. The above is one such. As silly as it is to relate the arm of the god who held the stone door of the cave open to keep the Sun Goddess from hiding to your own *name* – the poet is the 'Queen with Arms' 手持女王 *Tamochi no Ôkimi* – and gender, which *if only it were different* might allow you to muscle open the grave and save the deceased, apparently, comic intent could not be admitted where a poet is genuinely sad. I beg to differ. One *can* lament and laugh at the same time. Why not? Here is another such poem from the second major anthology, the 905 *Kokinshû*. It, too, is not in the comic *haikai* section.

なく涙雨とふらなむわたり河 水まさりなばかへりくるがに kks 10c
naku namida ame to furanan watarigawa mizu masarinaba kaeri-kuru ga ni ono no -
crying tears rain-as falling-should crossing-river water rising-if return! - takamura

*May my tears fall
like rain to flood that river
all must cross and*

*Overflowing, stop my wife
and send her back to life!*

*May my tears fall
like rain to flood the River
all must cross and*

*Be not an indian giver,
Life – Return my wife!*

Here, with the volume of tears accented, we feel the poet's pain more, but I would still ask, is not the idea of flooding the River Styx (crossed on the seventh day of the dead soul's journey to the nether world) with one's tears in order to make it uncrossable so the deceased would have to return not comic, or 'mad' from the point of view of the reader? And who says the poet was not pleased to think his grief bore a witty poem? Of course, my mad phrases such as "bring back the dead" for the first poem and "indian giver") for the second make them seem more *kyôka* than they are, but is that not only a difference in degree? As Chesterton has pointed out, wit and seriousness are *not* contrary. However, there are indeed less mad laments for the deaths of others than for one's own death in Japanese.

This is because polite and courageous people prefer to laugh at themselves than at others. Most Japanese laments are true eulogies. Some, mostly *kyôka*, are comic, but the black humor of the Occidental epitaph is rare.

すぐなるはまつきりたをすそまやまの ゆがむはのこる うき世なりけり 竹斎 17c
sugu naru wa makkiri-taosu soma-yama no yugamu wa nokoru ukiyo narikeri chikusai
 straight-be/are-as4 cutting-tumble timber-mountain's distort(ed)-as-for remain sad-world is!

*All the straight ones
 get chopped down right away
 on timber mountain.*

*What a sad and woeful world
 Where only the crooked stay!*

*What sad and woeful times!
 The crooked R allowed to be*

*while the straight
 are felled like trees! Do we
 live in timberland?*

Aside from exceptions such as those we just read playing with ways to block the path of the dead, most “pitiful hurting songs” 哀傷歌, or laments, in tame traditional *waka* bore me. So I tend to ignore chapters with such poems. *Wild waka* are another matter. This one, perhaps mourning the untimely death of a good man is by the fictional beggar saint Chikusai, who wandered about spouting mad poems and was the first to be called (at least in print) a “mad poem master,” or 狂歌師 *kyôka-shi*. It parodies Zhuang-ze (Lao-tse)’s gnarled old tree that explains it outlived others by being good for nothing. Such Taoist wisdom does seem a bit odd, or at least removed from the reality of a farming people, where inferior plants are culled. Since trees on a “timber mountain” or *somayama* 杣山, are grown to be cut, the metaphor itself is misplaced, making the poem all the more delightfully mad. I suppose that a specific good soul who met an untimely death gave rise to this poem in the tale within which this poem first appeared. Issa has a less sophisticated early 19c take on the same –

甘い露降か／＼と口明て待 程もなき鳥のふん哉 一茶 文化 12.8
amai tsuyu furuka furuka to kuchi akete matsu hodo mo naki tori no fun kana issa
 sweet dew fall? fall? and mouth opening wait/ing period even not bird-shit!

*Sweet dew, his due, was due to fall, we knew it would visit,
 Trusting, he opened his mouth and shut his eyes: bird-shit!*

~~~~~  
*Sweet dew, his was coming, a temple – I got the scoop.  
 Closing his eyes, he opened his mouth and? Bird poop!*

The translation in the 740-page monster is *Sweet dew, his due, was bound to fall – and so his mouth, / Trusting, opened wide only to find bird doo come south!* From the original, one might think this autobiographical, because, as a general rule, a poem by a *haikai* poet where no person is

given is assumed to be in the first (while classic *senryû*, as it deals in stereotype, tends to be in the third) but Yaba Katsuyuki's *Encyclopedia of Issa* mentions a friend who, after waiting years to become the owner of a temple, finally learned of his good fortune only to be felled by a sudden illness. So, I made it third-person. Though far from as clever as the *silverfish*, with many poems treating bird-shit as something good because of the pun associations on all shit (*un* as luck) and the value of uguisu shit for cosmetics), Issa's down-to-earth treatment of it is novel.

はゝの七めぐりの忌日になむあみだぶつのもじをかしらにをきてよめる哥の中にあの文字  
 あとまでも袖の涙のかはかぬはぬらせし膝のむくひなるらん 濱邊黒人  
 ato made mo sode no namida no kawakanu wa nuraseshi hiza no mukui naruran kurohito  
 after until (preface says 7 years) even sleeves' tears dry-not-as4 wet lap's karma is!

あ for My Late Mother

*After seven years  
 my sleeves are yet to dry, but  
 Why such tears?*

*It must be Karma, for all  
 the times I wet her lap!*

*Why do the tears  
 not dry upon my sleeves  
 after all these years?*

*It must be this: Payback  
 for the times I wet her lap!*

This is simple conceptual Tenmei *kyôka* (徳和後集 1785) at its best. Hamabe no Kurohito's lachrymal morass of personal grief transforms into pleasant humor by comic rather than cosmic karma. The original word is *mukui*, *retribution* or *just desert*. The preface explains this poem was for the Seventh anniversary of his mother's passing notes and one of seven each starting with a letter of なむあみだぶつ, *na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu*, the appeal to the merciful Amitabha Buddha starting the Lotus Sutra of the Supreme Law. Unlike the Occidental eulogy which is usually composed soon after someone dies, this type of remembrance tends to be reflective. It is common because in the Sinosphere, the anniversary of one's death, which is to say one's deathday is far more broadly observed than one's birthday, partly because aging was celebrated collectively on the New Year and partly because of the awareness that we do more to make our deaths than our births and the day of our death matters more for those who knew us or would have liked to have known us. Rationally speaking, it is the better day to mark. The genre of poetry where death-day poems that are not just personal but collective are most common is haiku. One could probably gather not thousands but *millions* of such poems as no one who writes haiku for long neglects to write them for their favorite poets or teachers. *Kyôka* was not *that* enamored with the practice, but there was one death that launched maybe a thousand poems marking its various anniversaries. That was Teiryû, the Ôsakan full-time *kyôka*-master in charge of a wide-flung franchise who died in 1734.



知るしらぬ人を狂歌に笑わせし其返報に泣てたまはれ 貞峨 1734  
 shiru shiranu hito o kyôka ni warawaseshi sono henpô ni naite tamaware teiga  
 know know-not people+acc kyôka-by laughed this/that payback-for cry+hon.! 置みやけ

*You who knew or didn't know he who made you laugh & died:  
 Now, if you would pay him back, laugh again, until you cry!*

~~~~~  
*Whether or not you met, if his mad poems made you laugh,
 You know what you owe him – Now, it's your turn to cry!*

This is a lament, or rather eulogy, for the most popular pre-Tenmei era mad poet, Teiryû, by his brother Teiga. I wish it were a death poem, for it reads better yet in a first-person translation. The “laugh until you cry” in the first reading is mine.

*Men I knew, Men I didn't – I made you laugh, before I died:
 Now, if you would pay me back, laugh again until you cry!*

~~~~~  
*Whether or not we met, if my mad poems made you laugh,  
 You know what you owe me – Now, it's your turn to cry!*

I first, mistakenly, thought it was. But it is not. *Mad In Translation* has over a score, mostly untranslated, from his various Death Day anniversaries,. Here is one by his son that was.

新しい尾ひれの付た言の葉は 死後迄はねる鯛屋貞柳 柳因 狂歌戒の鯛  
 atarashii obire no tsuita kotonoha wa shigô made haneru taiya teiryû ryûiin 1737  
 new tail fin/s attachd words-as-for death-aft evn flap/jump snapper-shop-teiryû

*Those dapper fins & tails he put upon our words have snap,  
 Like the snapper in his name, even dead we see them flap.*

..  
 “Tails and fins” is idiomatic for “flourishes” or “garnishes,” and sea bream, or *snapper* as we call it in Florida, served up whole for *sashimi*, arranged where its body was, can be seen fins still quivering and tail flapping on the plate. The original beats the translation for keeping the snapper, his family name Taiya=snapper-monger Teiryû for last.

*Words he dressed in fin and tail even dead stay dapper;  
 Flap alive as we partake – Teiryû is still the Snapper.*

I really wanted to introduce *other* laments for Teiryû, as some are excellent, but could not come up with any way to English their genius, so, instead, I thought I would try to at least do justice to that lively dead snapper. By getting the word snapper to be it, I feel a little better.

*His words live on: the laughter they bring us say he's not dead  
Like sashimi, moving still, 'Snapper' Teiryû is forever read.*

This would be better if the English reader had a strong image of a red snapper with no flesh on his bones (but what is neatly sliced and arranged there), still moving, but as is, I am afraid it is no improvement. And, there is something I only learned after doing all these readings that makes the snapper poem even better. The deceased Teiryû wrote a poem for his younger brother Teiga when their father, the *haikai* and *kyôka* master Tein 貞因 died at age 80 in 1700 that resolved that they would do their best to not to let those fins – flourishes and vigor – of the Snapper-shop line of *kyôka* fall off! (足下とわれ真子か白子かわかねども続く鯛屋の鰭な落しそ *soko to ware mako ka shirako ka . . .*). So the poem by Teiryû's son is the best sort of eulogy, a celebration for one of the few happy lives that fulfilled its promise.

..  
物ごとうときが好みてからやまとの文どもよみけるがみな月ばかりに身まかりければ  
あつめつる窓の蛍の影きえて涙や文のしみとなるらん 智恵内子 chie no naishi  
*atsumetsuru mado no hotaru no kage kiete namida ya fumi no shimi to naruran* 徳和  
gathered window's light vanishing tears writing/paper's stain/silverfish become! 1785

♪ *Stardust Memories* ♪

as he so loved the melancholy, i read some old  
yamato passages and, because he died in july –

*As the light faded  
from the fireflies I caught  
my teardrops on the page  
turn from stain to silverfish  
and swiftly steal away*

In the same representative Tenmei *kyôka* book that explained weeping as karma from wetting mama's lap, we find this poem by Little Ignoramus, the diva of *kyôka*. It is of a completely different and, for that genre, far rarer style: *elegant*. Consider both poems and it is easy to understand why Tenmei *kyôka* became so popular. The Chinese scholar who first wrote about reading – or, was it writing? – by light of firefly mentioned a *window*, perhaps because another scholar had one by which he stacked up mountains of snow the better to read by moonlight. Or, maybe the space between the double (paper) windows was ideal for turning into a firefly lamp. Or, maybe, Japanese, like me, always put their desks by windows, so that was where a lantern full of fireflies might best be set. *Whatever*. I traded in that window for *other* words, such as spelling-out both the *stain*

and the *silverfish* that in the original are, phonetically speaking, one and the same *shimi*, and the last line, *entirely* my invention. It also involves a guess. Were fireflies not mentioned and this not in a collection of *kyôka*, *shimi* might only have been a *stain*; but, here, why not bet on the additional bug? There may have been a pun in the preface, for the poetic name of the sixth month, *minazuki*, or “water month” sounds like “see-not,” and the stain may well be a witty association with that water. There are no “stardust memories,” but when I think of the dust of a silverfish that allies it to moths and butterflies and the sweetness of what was . . .

その人のしるしの塚はありなからはかなく落る我泪かな 時成狂歌  
 sono hito no shirushi no tsuka wa arinagara hakanaku= haka naku ochiru waga  
 namida kana. that man's mound-as-for is-while futilely=grave-not fall my tears!

*Here is a mound for one once quick and brave – So why  
 Do I cry? Because my tears fall on grass over no grave.*

In the original, the adverb *hakanaku* is two words, *grave=haka* and *not=naku*, meaning *without a grave* and, after the following verb/gerund, “*falling*” modifying “my tears” which follow, also evokes *crying*, then finally morphs into an adverb meaning *despairingly/futilely*. Such puns are more than enough to make a poem, or, in translation, break it.

..

~~~~~  
 At first, you may not get what the following is about. At first, neither did your translator. This story of misreading and finally catching a *kyôka* is taken almost as-is, chapter title and all, from the 740-page Monster.
 ~~~~~

## Meaningless Postscript, On Expecting the Unexpected

すかし屁の消え易きこそあわれなれ みはなき物と思ひながらも 紀定麿 徳和  
 sukashi-he no kie-yasuki koso aware nare mi wa nakimono to omoinagara mo ki-no-sadamaru  
 slip[silent]fart's vanish-easily espec. sad is: substance-as-for not-thing knowing-while 1785

*How sad a thing  
 the silent fart, so quick  
 to disappear!*

*I get no cheer in knowing  
 'twas nothing from the start.*

In traditional *waka*, those suffering unrequited love were said to “easily vanish,” i.e., *quickly pine away*. Hence, I thought the above an allegory for

such love that did not come to fruition. As it turned out, my reading, was likewise, futile and had to be crossed it out for missing the point, which we will, eventually, get to. That translation was hard to kill, for it had a certain charm and it took wine to bring me the correct reading, despite myself. During my wine time (11~12AM, 5~6 & 11~12PM) – between black coffee time and meal time as health demands – I cannot help but jump in and make poems mine or, to paraphrase Edwin Cranston, lie back and let it rewrite itself (“*I have tended to let the poems rewrite themselves in ways that sometimes are no doubt not strictly excusable on the grounds given above*” (*Waka*, vol 2a)). This taking in or letting go – oddly, they amount to pretty much the same thing – is exactly what AI translation cannot do and why computers may *write* some sorts of poetry (the simple and the surreal) well enough but never *translate* it well. Here is my *wine time* reading:

..

*Pity the silent fart,  
vanishing without a trace,  
though nothing of substance  
in the first place  
– Who is? –*

You may note the form varies from the original enough to be a different sort of animal, what I call a *paraverse*; but, as it turns out, my wine had more verity than I did. Rhetorical question and all, This mad translation, or invention, actually got it right, while the stricter reading I eventually had to cross-out did not. Why did *I* get it wrong? *Unrequited love* – the metaphor implicit to my first (mis)translation – was born of my reading or, rather, the union of countless sad lovers bemoaning or welcoming the vanishing of their souls in the *Manyôshû* and the word *Fart* as exemplified by Suckling’s “*Love is the fart / Of every heart; / It pains when ‘tis kept close; / It pains a man when ‘tis kept close; / And others doth offend, when ‘tis let loose*” in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary*! Not knowing this *kyôka* is generally explained as a *parody of corny death poems*, and the *mi*, i.e., the *substance*, puns on the *body* or the *self*, not *love*, I missed that intent when I read and translated it in the mid-1990’s, failing to notice it was in a chapter of the classic 1785 *kyôka* anthology *Tokuwa Kago Manzaishû* titled 哀傷歌 *aishôka*, or *laments*, the sub-context of which means “other than for love, as those complaints are in the love-poem chapters,” and I missed a small-font preface to the effect that said *fart* was treating *impermanence* 寄屁無常, and that word for impermanence, *mujô*, was one seldom applied to love. In other words, it was one of the few *kyôka* I encountered before my sudden interest in the genre in early-2008. Burton Watson (read in Shirane+Brandon: 2002) , as far as I know, got it correct the first time with a good straight translation made by reversing the word order and turning the allusive pun into a clear simile:

Though this body, I know,  
 is a thing of no substance,  
 must it fade, alas,  
 so swiftly,  
 like a soundless fart? (trans. Burton Watson)

Of course, there still is a problem with the *logic*. Not Watson's, or mine, but the original's. It may hurt for one to pass away unheralded, but nothing stinks like a silent fart, usually modified, for good reason, as "deadly." Speaking of which, *kyōka* is itself a good example of a literary form tending to flatulence that has not received much attention yet is nonetheless said to stink. Modernologist and Tokyo University phd. student (Department of Contemporary Literary Studies), Ryan Morris, notes in his web magazine/blog *Behold My Swarthy Face* that the prolific scholar-translator Donald Keene was

apparently was not too fond of *kyōka*, calling it a "minor form of poetry." In his *World Within Walls*, Keene wrote that "their [i.e., the *kyōka* poets'] fascination with trivialities . . . was clearly the result of a disinclination or inability to face the world seriously." "We are apt to form the impression," he continues, "that the *kyōka* poets lacked subjects of their own; that was why they so often resorted to parody." (*Ishikawa Jun's "Moon Gems"* – rough draft, January 26, 2008)

..

Further discussion and example suggest Keene undervalued the genre. Let me be more blunt. His charge against *kyōka* poets could be made for most *waka* poets and not a few *haijin* (*haikai* poets) too. No, it could be made for *most poets anywhere*. How many have "subjects of their own?" Poets generally write on whatever has always been written about *in their respective cultures*. The fact a poem might be personal is no help. Feelings, like other opinions, may be sincere and newly-hatched from the individual's point of view, but totally boring for one who has read much of the same going back millennia. So, we might better ask: *Which is more boring, poems repeating things that go back forever or poems parodying – though the question is unfair for if you have read this book carefully you now know that "parody" encompasses many sorts of take-offs and allusions for which we have no better word – such poems?* To my mind, so-called *parodies*, or at least the better ones, tend to be the poems that do *not* repeat history but add something new to it. I recall reading about the Chinese ruler who had all books burned so he would become known as the First Emperor of all time when I was a boy and thinking *Ripley's Believe It or Not* sure found something outlandish; but, *now*, I think that Emperor represents the modern view of the poet-as-creator, one who composes *ex nihilo*. In other words, our ability to forget the past is so great today we

hardly need destroy it to pretend to originality. Don't get me wrong. Anyone who has read my books on old haiku knows how much I appreciate new variations and creativity. I am also a Keene fan. I like most of his translations and envy his material, some of which I wish I had first dibs on. He *does*, however, short-change humor, of which *kyôka* would be the prime example. Is it possible he does this because it is especially hard to translate and believing the genre to be inferior helps him rationalize his choice not to? Even the great are not exempt from cognitive dissonance.

..

Be that as it may – and I hope I have been fair, as Keene is hardly alone in overlooking *kyôka* – I, who consider taking the world with a grain of salt a mark of sanity, would like to end this book as I began my book on the dream time of the Japanese New Year, *The Fifth Season* (2007), with a quote from G.K. Chesterton's *Heretics*. It is not the same one. The last championed the cosmic contentment of staying home rather than globe-trotting *ala* Kipling and lamented how the automobile shrank rather than enlarged the world. I used it because the enchanted season I introduced bore and was born of a culture that Chesterton, had he come to know it from within, would have loved, as surely as we who know it love Chesterton whether or not we are Christian. This one, from chapter 16, "On Mr. McCabe and a Divine Frivolity" explains why *wit* is not merely a spice to sprinkle on otherwise bland ideas to make them palatable, but just what we seek, the thing that, whether we know it or not, makes us pick up a book. After the preliminaries ("Mr. McCabe thinks that I am not serious but only funny, because Mr. McCabe thinks that funny is the opposite of serious," while, in reality, "Funny is the opposite of not funny, and of nothing else," "Whether a man chooses to tell the truth in long sentences or short jokes is a problem analogous to whether he chooses to tell the truth in French or German" etc. ), we find this enlightening passage:

... the only serious reason which I can imagine inducing any one person to listen to any other is, that the first person looks to the second person with an ardent faith and a fixed attention, expecting him to say what he does not expect him to say. It may be a paradox, but that is because paradoxes are true. It may not be rational, but that is because rationalism is wrong. But clearly it is quite true that whenever we go to hear a prophet or teacher we may or may not expect wit, we may or may not expect eloquence, but we do expect what we do not expect. We may not expect the true, we may not even expect the wise, but we do expect the unexpected. If we do not expect the unexpected, why do we go there at all? If we expect the expected, why do we not sit at home and expect it by ourselves?



## A Mad Miscellany: *Things that Failed to Find a Chapter* your translator thought you might just enjoy reading . . .

白粉の看板とする凸に 凹知らぬ下駄屋文盲 蜀山人 我衣

*oshiroi no kanban to suru nakadaka ni nakahiku shiranu getaya monmô shokusanjin d.1823*  
white-powder/make-up's sign-as make mid.-high/protrusion despite, cavity know-not *geta*-sellers illiterate

White powder to heighten features sold by the 凸 sign on site;  
凹 would do for double-stilt shoes if cobblers could but write

~~~~~  
White foundation, the *deko* 凸 sign shows the features you lack
Boko 凹 would for *geta* do, if cobblers wrote upon their back!

~~~~~  
Below the *deko* 凸 shingle white foundation can be found;  
No *boko* 凹 proves all *geta* sellers illiterate or unsound.

Capitalism is usually thought to be Occidental, but actually it is a complex phenomena and the Occident did not lead in every respect. 16c visitors to China found it a vibrant market economy with more various goods and specialized services than found in Europe, and Edo period visitors observed that Japan led the way in publicity ploys and labeled pricing. In Kyôto make-up was commonly sold under the sign “凸如” or “(makes you look) as if (your facial contours are) convex.” So why haven't those stupid *geta*-makers followed suit, jokes Shokusanjin, unfairly, or nonsensically, if you prefer, as the 凹 would need to be turned over to make this character meaning *concave* a picture of a stilt clog.

凸凹といふ字無筆も感じ入り 柳多留

*dekoboko to iu ji muhitsu mo kanji-iri yanagidaru 92-7*  
convex/protrusion-intrusion/concave so-called letter brushless even feel

even people  
who can't write can read  
the letters 凸凹

凸 and 凹  
even illiterates feel  
these letters

even people  
who cannot read like  
凸 and 凹

With *senryû*, we chuckle, as we do with a Piet Hein *grook* masterpiece which points out that with everything either *concave* or *-vex*, whatever we dream will be about *sex*. What Shokusanjin adds to the mix is both reportage and absurdity. My third reading of his poem, found in the *Kyôka Appreciation Dictionary*, probably makes too much sense.



阿弥陀は 波の底にこそあれ・南無といふ声のうちより身を投げて  
*amida wa nami no soko ni koso are // namu to iu koe no uchi yori mi o nagete* 竹馬  
 amida-as-for waves' bottom-on +emph. is // namu-sez-voice/s'-within-from body+acc throwing

◆ *Amida found on the bed of the sea?* ◆

*With the sound 'Namu' still in the air,  
 They threw themselves into the water.*

*Namu-amida-butsu*, a long name for the Buddha, is how many sutras start. The Jesuits gave I-witness accounts of such suicides where believers in the reality of another world, a paradise, unencumbered by religious fear of suicide, filled their sleeves with rocks and merrily stepped off boats into the sea in the 16c. This anonymous 14-17-split *haikai* comes from the *Chikuma Kyôginshû* 竹馬狂吟集 (明応八年), a 1499 collection sometimes called the start of *haikai* as a genre. It was among a number of riddles found by my respondent when I asked for help finding some for the “Painful but Funny Things: Riddles & Natural Wit” chapter of the 740-page *Monster*. The 7-7 *ku* in the original is not a clear question. The question part of a Japanese riddle is usually not one. This makes it hard to say where riddles begin. Take, for example, this *kyôka* found in a 17c miscellany, the poems of which were reprinted in *Broadview*. To me, such a poem is a riddle with one of many potential solutions.

しる人にひけらかしてもよき物は 軍場でとる大将のくび 読人不知 私可多咄  
*shiru hito ni hikerakashite mo yoki mono wa ikusaba de toru taishô no kubi* anon. tk 参 34  
 know-person-to show-off even good thing-as-for battle-place-at take captain's head 1659

*Things that are fine to show-off to all you know –*

◎ *If taken in battle, the head of a mighty foe.*

It may also be a parody not of a poem but of a genre of literature that might be called the tasteful description and grouping of *things*, as an exercise of aesthetic discrimination, or editorial listing, the rudiments of which are first found in China but only came of age in *The Pillow Book* (c.1000) of *Sei Shônagon*, the miscellany of this outrageous – she criticized rich men for marrying ugly women, declared only handsome men should preach because if women failed to pay attention they might sin, etc. – *diva* of good taste. The practice of listing, 物は尽くし *mono wa tsukushi*, became a genre half a millennium later when books with nothing but listing appeared. *Sei Shônagon* did not only list her favorites such as *adorable things* (eg., “a face drawn on a melon,”) but included the objectionable, such as *dirty things* (eg., “the inside of a cat’s ear,”). Still,

the head taken in battle is rougher than her material. Hence, the *kyôka* seems to me a dig at the *diva*. Here is a *haikai* example of a type of listing we may call “*While X, Y,~*” things, though the “thing” is the translator’s:

無念ながらもうれしかりけり さりかぬる老妻を人にぬすまれて 16c  
*munen nagara mo ureshikarikeri sarikanuru rôsai o hito ni nusumarete inu-tsukuba*  
 chagrin/fury while even happy+emph // leave-cannot old-wife+acc person-by stolen

*A thing that brings regret, but greater joy:  
 The old wife you’d divorce flees w/ a boy!*

Or, “*It makes me furious, yet also makes me glad / My old wife who wouldn’t leave, stolen by a younger lad!*” (*lad* and *boy* were born of rhyme, *hito* means *another person*). Teachers of link-verse found that such a pre-verse *mae-ku*, or, draw – whether 17 or 14 – served to elicit multiple *tsuke-ku*, or caps from students. One of the best-known examples of such, from the same *Inu* (Dog=pseudo) *Tsukuba* anthology (1539), is “*You want to cut; you want not to cut*” *mae-ku*, capped by such as “*Catching the thief, you take a good look & it’s your son,*” or, “*A cherry tree’s / branch of bloom blocks / the clear moon.*” In the extended foreword of *The Woman Without a Hole* (2007), I relate this to the psychology of collecting and the birth of hyper-short-form poetry in general and *senryû* with its *maezuke*, or “draw-accompanied” in particular. The other best-known example is –

苦々しくもおかしかりけり・我が親の死ぬる時にも屁をこきて 宗鑑? 犬筑波集  
*kurukurushiku mo okashikarikeri • waga oya no shinuru toki ni mo he o kokite sôkan?*  
 distressing but funny+emph. – my/your-own parent’s dying time-at-even fart cutting

*Distressing, yes, distressing, yet it really is a blast –  
 For a fart to escape you while dad breathes his last!*

This became controversial because Teitoku (1571-1653) took it up to rake dead Sôkan, the editor of the *Inu Tsukubashû* (it is not clear he actually wrote the poem), over the coals for unfilial behavior. Either, Teitoku, who was broad-minded in most ways, was fixated on parent-child relations, or he felt this was a good way to score brownie points with the censors to ensure he could get away with murder in his own *haikai* and *kyôka*. Among the eleven more decent responses to the “*upsetting, but funny, too*” (H. Sato) – my *distressing/blast* is rhyme & pun-born – draw offered by Teitoku, we have “*A woman falls in public revealing her privates*” (*hitonaka de korobu onago no mae dashite*), hardly better. Probably Teitoku, subconsciously desiring a pretext to take a jab at Sôkan, imagined a stink, which would indeed be a shame and not at all funny, while Sôkan originally heard something high-pitched and musical.

~~~~~  
 身ひとつは山の奥にもありぬべし すまぬこゝろそをき所なき 安楽庵作伝? p1623
mi hitotsu wa yama no oku ni mo arinubeshi sumanu kokoro zo okidokoro naki sakuden
 body-one-as4 mountains' recess-in even is-ought live=be-clear-not heart ! stayplace not

*No one should live alone back in the hills, out of the way
 Unhappy with your Self where can you send him to stay?*

The original is one of thousands of poems playing with the *sumi* homophone of the verb for living (residing) and being pure (clear), none of which translate well, but this is the first time I have seen the impure, i.e. restless heart punned into one *without a place to stay* (*sumanu*). Because English does not allow the heart/mind to separate from the body as clearly as Japanese does (see Saigyô's poems in *Cherry Blossom Epiphany* 2007), it became a "self" and then a "him."

山ざとにしりごみしつゝ入しより うき世の事は屁とも思はず 四方赤良
yamazato ni shirigomi shi-tsutsu irishi yori ukiyo no koto wa he to mo omowazu akara
 mountn home/town-in hesitantly do-while entered-there-frm floatng-world-things-as4 fart evn think-not

On the Mind of One Leaving the World Behind

*Since he retired while holding in mixed feelings like a fart,
 He no longer gives a shit for the city or so he tells his heart*

~~~~~  
*Since retiring in the hills with mixed feelings, God was kind:  
 you would think he never gave a shit for what he left behind*

~~~~~  
*Up the mountain he goes, unsure he would retreat: a blast
 proclaims that the old fart's love for the world has past.*

The above poem by *kyôka*'s top master is fairly well-known, but it is debatable how many moderns slow down enough to catch its subtle meaning, which in the original depends entirely on a close reading of the "since" (*yori*). By "God" in the second reading, your translator refers to what is more commonly called cognitive dissonance. In retrospect, the reading seems easy enough, but the reading copy of the 740-page monster translates the *Aire for a Buddhist Hermit* in the following ways: 1) *Turning tail on man / he lives behind the times back / up a windy hollar; // & for the world or mighty / Dollar does not give a fart; & 2) And backing into / the hinderparts where even / rumors slip not past // He cuts no slack nor gives / a fart for the entire world.* Do you see what happened? Play too much with figures of speech and you can lose the larger picture.

Or, maybe *not*. Your translator may be reading *too* closely. Thinking too much. Indeed, his respondent thinks the old reading is all there is to it.

山家屁 山住みは屁をひるのみか夜はなほくさきの風の音ばかりなる 智恵内子
 yama-zumi wa he o hiru nomi ka yoru wa nao kusaki no kaze no oto bakari naru chie-no-naishi
 mountain-living-as-for fart+acc cut(=daytime) only? night more stinky=trees-grasses'sound only is=blast

*So, is life at land's end naught but cutting farts by day and, then
 listening all night long as stunted mountain trees pass wind!*

This, found in the *Kyôka Dictionary*, is by the top late-18c female kyôka master, Little Ignoramus. The original has one plain “fart/s” and three fart-related puns! Chie no Naishi probably alludes to at least two poems and one common trope. One is Akara’s above poem. The second would be Shikibu’s poem in her fictional exchange with Ko-Shikibu we saw on page 212. They all play with an old conceit of a mountain-as-fart (〜) owing to the resemblance of its silhouette to the same, that probably was born of *haikai*. All are complex, with this last positing facetious punning reasons for the mountain/wilderness-life the most so. *Senryû* on the other hand, would play with it much more simply – inevitable given only 17-mora – by noting how the shape of an outhouse roof is a fart (740-pg *Monster*, pg. 399). And, now that we have gotten past the significance of the poem, let me make amends for the loss in translation (one good pun, passing wind is not enough to make up for three!) by offering a paraverse:

*Mountain hollars are bad enough by day you want to hollar back;
 But night is worse: the wind howls each time you'd hit the sack!*

The most famous fartsy *kyôka* is untranslatable. It was no more than *he he* for the entire 31-mora poem. If you wish to see the full treatment, see the 740-page *Monster*. Suffice it to say that *he* means both *fart* and *har!* as in “*Har, har, har!*” so the poet is laughing at the person who wanted him to *kyôka* a farting person – or was it himself? or the fart, itself? – as well as recording it. This simple stereo was a natural for Japan where even faces had two ways to be sketched with farts (〜)!

天満天神 砂糖よりあまみつ神のいますこそ 山蜂多く有馬なるらめ 行風
 satô yori amamitsu kami no imasu koso yamabachi ôku arima naru rame kôfû
 sugar-more-than sweet-water=heaven-filling gods' are esp. hornet many have=arima is

Tenman Tenjin (Sugawara no Michizane) Shrine

*Sweeter than sugar our Heaven-filling Honey-God must be why
 deep in the Arima hills we see so many hornets in the sky.*

The preface’s Tenmantenjin 天満天神 Heaven-Filling-Heaven-God is the 心霊 *divine-spirit* of Sugawara no Michizane, a 9c poet-scholar and minister of state and short for his shrine, one of many found throughout

Japan. One must like a poet who liked Taoism (his name, Michizane 道真 is literally “road-truth,” and one poem begins “*To avoid noisy places is my nature, / yet I love the gurgling of a stream*” (Carter trans.) and regret his death “from a broken heart” at age 53. His legendary reputation as an ill-used but loyal minister and fear of his vengeful spirit because many who conspired to get him banished had tragedies after his death gained him extraordinary posthumous honors and numerous shrines out of proportion to anything he accomplished. His spirit and shrine name was pronounced in the Chinese manner, *Tenjin*, but Kôfû, the editor of the first really great *kyôka* anthology and the section of a huge *kyôka* baedeker that treated the aristocrats’ favorite vacation place, the spas of Arima, chose a Japanese pronunciation, Amamitsu, to gain the pun on *sky-filling=amamitsu=sweet-honey* to explain the hornets, apt for his vengeful spirit, too! Scores of poems from that baedeker (Japanese, below) are in the 740-page *Monster*.

歌舞妓 (東海道名所記 浅井了意著 地誌所載狂歌抄 万時年間)

うつくしき若衆歌舞妓をんながた これは世界のまんなかそかし
utsukushiki wakashû kabuki-onnagata kore wa sekai no mannaka zokashi
 beautiful young-crowd/gays kabuki woman-role this-as-for world’s center+emph!

Beautiful gay and gorgeous kabuki fake-woman guys –
 So, the center of the world is *this*? A singular surprise!

~~~~~  
*Beautiful young-crowd & kabuki-woman guys, of course*  
*At the middle of the World we find creation at its source!*

~~~~~  
Lovely youth and manly actors playing a woman’s role or
Is this the center of the world before sex went bi-polar?

~~~~~  
*Boy beauties and he-men playing women in great demand:*  
*If this is not the Center of the World, well, I’ll be damned!*

This one is *not* in the *Monster*. It is in the same 17c baedeker mentioned above but a different section I had not read closely – as topographic poems tend to be shallow and boring for the same reason that travel itself is – and only found it today (Sept. 5, 2009), thanks to feeling under the weather and reading in bed. Let me add that, for me, reading *kyôka* is something like being a biologist in a remote jungle. Everywhere one looks, something new, *i.e.*, hitherto un-named or untranslated, is discovered. And this poem was an easy find as it heads the section on the Tôkaidô, or Eastern seaboard. That means it describes Nihonbashi, the official navel – point zero in travel maps – of Edo period Japan. A top entertainment district, it boasted *wakashu*, or trendy homosexual youth, and *onnagata* kabuki actors, the greatest stars of the time. While Asai Ryôri is emphatic

(~ *zokashi*), and if “world” had an easier rhyme, the second line might start, “*Damned if this is not the center*,” he does not make the connection explicit. Do we have space recapitulating time –a look back to Chinese mythic beginnings sharing something with Plato’s concept of trans- or poli-sexual singularity? Or is it just that the center seems right for middle-sex or transgendered behavior? &, should this have been with the squibs?

Because the connection between the location and the off-genders is not explicit in the original, there is a strong possibility the poem originated in a comic story where the context would help the reader fill that in. As your translator is only now starting to locate and try to obtain comic stories, there is always a chance that he will miss something. That, of course, is not only his problem. Much that is supposedly lost *in* translation is actually lost *before* translation. Knowing that is one more justification for the “pro-active” translation of the sort you have seen in this book.

---

竹馬を杖にも今日はたのむかな わらわ遊びをおもひいでつつ 西行  
*takeuma o tsue ni mo kyô wa tanomu kana warawa asobi o omoiide tsutsu saigyô d.1190*  
 stilt+acc cane-as-even today-as-for depend/pray!/?/: children’s play+acc remembering-as

*I put my faith in a bamboo pony as my cane, today,  
 Sallying forth with memories of child-play.*

Stilts in the Sinosphere are “bamboo horses.” The 740=page monster has “living together with” rather than “sallying forth,” but the word for *remembering* includes “*ide*” or “going out,” so one can *almost* justify this more gallant reading; but, even without it, Saigyô’s *waka* would be a *kyôka* had it been written by a *kyôka* poet or comic story-writer.

懐旧 またがりし 乳母が脊中を正真の馬と見し世ぞ 今は恋しき 蜀山人  
*kaikyû matagarishi uba ga senaka o seishin no uma to mishi yo zo ima wa koishiki shokusanjin d.1823*  
 reminiscence // straddled wet-nurse’s back+acc true horse-as saw+exclam now-as-for dear

♪ Longing for Bygone Days ♪

*How dear to me those golden years I straddled her back  
 & Nanna was my war horse (not a pony or a hack).*

“War” is not in Shokusanjin’s *kyôka*, but to any boy, riding means *battles*. Perhaps, it should be added that while riding a person seems more mad than walking on stilts, in Japan, most little children were and still are more commonly carried on backs, where it takes little additional energy and permits the hands of the parent, older sister or nanna to remain free than

any other way. Unlike the Amerindian papoose, often carried in a backpack facing toward the rear, in Japan the little child or baby clung face down to the back so when a nanna was old and bent and the child relatively old, it really did resemble riding. Let's see one more pair of poems by Saigyô and Shokusanjin. See if you can guess which is which:

我もさぞ庭のいさごの土遊び さて生ひたてる身にこそありけれ  
*ware mo sazo niwa no isago no tsuchi-asobi sate ôitateru mi ni koso arikere*  
 me even! garden children's dirt/mud/clay play, yes age=living self/body-w/ esp. am

*I, too, am ever the little child in the garden at play;  
 The older I get, the more I feel at home with clay.*

~~~~~  
*I guess I am a mud figure like kids make in play,
 for I must animate myself each and every day!*

The verb describing an *aging* body is written with the character for *live*, *grow* or *energize*, 生 while the pronunciation *oi* allows *aging* 老, i.e., the reading suggested by the context (coming before the *body-self* 身 *mi*), despite the different character. If my second reading, *by any chance*, hits the mark, more than sheer nostalgia animates the poem.

老のあたま撫でてしきりに恋しきは坊といはれし昔なりけり
oi no atama nadete shikiri ni koishiki wa bô to iwareshi mukashi narikeri
 age's/elderly head stroking very dear/nostalgic-as-for, 'monk'-as calld old-days became!

*Stroking my old head, a memory clear as from a crystal ball
 Of a boy with shaven pate once called just 'monk' by all.*

All little boys were called *bô* or monk, mostly because their heads were regularly shaven and many if not most old men of the noble, samurai and merchant classes retired and ended up life as or seeming to be the same. This may be read as a poem that welled up purely from feelings, from the actual experience of the poet. But, it may also be seen as a clever closing of the birth-to-death circle by finding parallels for the word *bô*.

OK. Which was Saigyô (12c) and which Shokusanjin (early-19c)? The mud poem was the former; the head-stroking the latter. While a crystal ball was added for the rhyme and association with head, Shokusanjin's monk-to-monk cycle had the obvious clear-cut logic of a *kyôka*. Saigyô's mud, in the manner of many *waka*, but less *kyôka*, did not spell-out what it was driving at with "living/growing" body, so your translator had to guess in order to come up with a mad poem rather than a "huh?" Of course, there are explicitly comic poems in *waka* collections and *kyôka* so understated their novelty must be developed, or discovered *in mad translation*.

One long entry from the Monster's *Glossary*, part of which was given, with changes, after the Table of Contents in this book.

Tanka A short (31-mora) *waka*, but the vast majority of *waka* were short, so they were almost always just called *waka* or *uta* (or *ka* for short, or counting, *kubi*), and *tanka* came to mean modern *waka*, a less exclusive form than the classic *waka*. As my respondent Yoshioka Ikuo and others have noted (see the citation in the Monster) this *tanka* includes much that would have been considered *kyôka* for most of the past millennium, and is, thus, closer to it, but, as this is generally not recognized, the genre is left without a true history. As frivolity and wordplay is frowned upon in some *tanka* circles, I do not expect all tankaists to love this book, but I would hope others find something to celebrate in the mixed roots of their literature. Take the title of Tawara Machi's 1988 *tanka* best-seller, サラダ記念日 *Sarada Kinenbi* (*Salad Anniversary*). *Sarada* サラダ is obviously modern and Occidental while *kinenbi* is a stiff *kango*, or Chinese word. A few of her poems:

*Composite me! Every facet split off and fly away, do!
That means all three hundred and sixty five of you!*

我という三百六十五面**対**ぶんぶん分裂して飛んでゆけ 俵万智
ware to iu sanbyakurokujûgo-*mentai bun bun bunretsu shite tondeyuke* tawara machi
i-as called threehundredsixtyfive-hedron/sidedpartpart partsplit doing fly-go/leave!

classroom-in each/one-each/one's time fulfilled-is ninety-two eyeballs and i
kyôshitsu ni sore-zore no toki mitashi-oru kyûjûni ko no medama to watashi
教室にそれぞれの時充たしおる九十二個の目玉と私 俵万智

*A happy day in the classroom, how time flies
for me and the pupils of ninety two eyes!*

面**対** *mentai* following 365 (not 360 as a hyperlogical poet might want) in the first poem makes it a geometrical body as surely as a hexahedron or a heptahedron is. *Composite* is my compensation. The *pupils* gain in translation as Japanese lacks that particular homophony. Both poems are of a sort we might call *mad* for the surreal touch.

天気予報聞きのがしたる一日は雨でも晴れでも腹が立たない 俵万智
tenki yohô kikinogashitaru ichinichi wa ame demo hare demo hara ga tatanai
weather report hearing-miss one-day-as-for rain even clear even belly stands-not

*The Weather Report, well, I missed it today,
So rain or shine, I've no cause for dismay!*

沈黙ののちの言葉を選びおる君のためらいを楽しんでおり 俵万智
chinmoku no nochi no kotoba o erabi-oru kimi no tamerai o tanoshinde ori
 silence's after's words+acc choosing-are-your hesitation+acc enjoying-am

*It tickles me to watch you when nothing is heard,
 Groping in the silence to find that right word.*

Of the four poems, only the last, added for contrast, could *never* be taken for a *kyôka* and only the weather report seems *absolutely so*, as it is clearly hyperlogical. Without the rhyme and other poetic license I take in translation, most *tanka* from *Salad Anniversary* would not be considered mad at all. I must play more with *tanka* to better understand how much of my mad translations are and are not me.

♪ Not noted in the Monster: Fifteen or twenty years ago, I sent a dozen or two of my *Salad* translations to the translator of one of the two English translations. She replied that she enjoyed the translations and would like, with my permission (gladly given) to show them to her class, but was it possible they might not be more Dorothy Parker than Tawara Machi? She was, of course, right – and I *love* Dorothy Parker – but, it is also true that there is a touch more Dorothy Parker, *i.e.*, *wit*, in Tawara Machi's poetry than either of the published translations reveal. After looking forward, next we will go back to the 8c Manyôshû, & note there are chapters on drinking (and smoking) in the *Monster* not in this *Reader*.

Trading Blood for a Drink Beats Being a Monkey?

さりとてはけふまたしちにやれ蚊帳 酒にそ我はくらはれにける 暁月房作
saritote wa kyô mata shichi ni yare kachô sake ni zo ware wa kurawarenikeri kyôgetsu-bô?
 regardless today again pawnshop-to give+emph. mosq.net sake-by i-as-for eaten+emph.

*Once again, today
 I'm off to the pawnshop!
 My mosquito net
 Will get some wine; and
 I'll be eaten up this time!*

*A man will drink.
 Today, the pawnshop gets
 my mosquito net
 and I will be, literally,
 swallowed by my wine!*

I love this *kyôka*, playing upon an old proverb warning that a one begins by imbibing wine and ends up imbibed *by* it. [The above is a chapter lead as-is from *The 740-page Monster*. It is followed by a witty exchange I want in my obit, but we shall skip it here]. The *kyôka*, attributed to the monk sometimes called the founder of *kyôka*, Kyôgetsu-bô 暁月坊 (1265-1328), is not in any of the large 17c *kyôka* compilations only in the 18c *Kyôka Hundred Poems on Sake* 狂歌酒百首 attributed to him 伝暁月坊 with a note *claiming* it is pre-1497. Now let us go back to the beginning, or at least the most famous early Japanese drinking *waka*.

驗無 物乎不念者 一杯乃 濁酒乎 可飲有良師 大伴旅人万葉歌 #338
shirushi-naki mono o omowazu wa hitotsuki no nigoreru sake o nomu beku arurashi
 results-not things think-not-as-for one cup/fill-up of cloudy sake drink should+emph.

*When in doubt,
 don't think, drink: cloudy wine
 will clear you up.*

*Think not to rout
 the blues but drink raw wine
 & they will cloud.*

If *love* is one source of mad poetry, *wine*, in this case made from fermented rice, is another. As every translator of the *Manyôshû* (8c) includes a sip of Ôtomo no Tabito's 13 poems in praise of wine, I thought to pass, but failing to find any pursuit of the ideas in them, changed my mind. This one plays with the symbolism of *clear* and *muddy*. With clear springs and streams, memories run deep; specifying *cloudy sake*, cheaper than the clear stuff, as ideal for obscuring thought is a stroke of conceptual genius. My haiku-length paraverses, indirectly show my appreciation for it. The original is longer and simply says *you'd be better drinking a full saucer of muddy white wine than thinking about things thinking does not help*. The next poem of the series is even more in the mode of what came to be called a *kyôka*, as it plays upon an old Chinese saw.

酒名乎 聖跡負師 古昔 大聖之 言乃宜左 万葉 #339
sake no na o hijiri to ouseshi inishie no ôki hijiri no koto no yoroshisa tabito
 sake's name+acc saint/sage as named ancient big s/s/s words suitability/goodness

♪ A True Conservative to a Prohibitionist ♪

*The ancient sages called wine Sage,
 So what gives with our Age?*

The original says only that *the great sages of ancient times sure did a fine thing to call wine “聖 saint.”* Proverbs call clear wine that, and cloudy wine “賢人 *sage*,” a cut below saint. As moralists down on drinking undoubtedly provoked the response, I pulled up the last half of my short & mad reading+title by its ears from between the lines. [& I took this from the *Monster* because the fact Tabito's poems are *not* in the comic book 16 of the *Manyôshû* proves light poetry was not completely segregated in ancient Japan. The Chinese characters above are the orthography of the original *Manyôshû*, while the mixed characters below are the way scholars make it legible today.]

なかなか人にあらずは酒壺に成りにてしかも酒に染みなむ
nanakanaka ni hito to arazu wa sakatsubo ni nari nite shikamo sake ni nijimina #343
 completely person-as be-not-as-for sake-jug into becoming, moreover wine-by stain-would

♪ Moderation, you say? ♪

*Rather than play the half-hearted lug,
 Let me soak myself in wine: I'd be a jug.*

♪ A Red-Faced Riposte to Wrinkle-browed Teetotalers ♪

*How unsightly those men too damn smart to drink;
They look far more like monkeys than they think!*

↑ *ana miniku sakashiru o su to sake nomanu hito o yoku miba saru ni ka mo mimu* #344 ↑
あなみにく酒には思ひます鏡 底なるかけはさるにかも似る 暁月房作 酒百 ↓
ana miniku sake ni wa omoimasu kagami soko naru kage wa saru ni ka mo niru kyôgetsu-bô

*How ugly my face in a square cup, drinking blue
I look red as a monkey, thinking as I do of you!*

Like all primates, red-faced Japanese macaque have a way of wrinkling their brows as if thinking, and that is used to turn the table on teetotalers who called drinkers “monkeys” for being red-faced. Monk Kyôgetsu plays with the *Manyôshû* poem, punning part of a conjugation, into a *masuzake* cup which immediately becomes a mirror. Another of his drinking poems is full of puns: the man in the moon, Katsura-o, who pivots into a male drinking alone with nibbly/ies that morph into his girlfriend:

十五夜の月のかつらのおとこ酒 さかなのいもやちきりなるらん 百酒
jûgoya no tsuki no katsura no otoko-zake sakana no imo ya chigiri naru ran
15-night/full-moon's laurel-male-sake, nibbles'(that are) yam=girl vow/sex becomes!

– *When it's full, the Man in the Moon he drinks like one:
With potatoes for his tarts, I guess he always gets some!*

Rather than choose between the old Chinese-character *Manyô* inscription and a modern transcription, let us cut to the chase and just romanize the last, and most *kyôka* of the *Manyô* series (*kono yo ni shi tanoshiku araba komu yo ni wa mushi tori ni mo ware wa narinamu* #349):

♪ *This is my life – so if I can have my fun,
I'll gladly be a bug or bird in the next one* ♪

~~~~~  
We can conclude this Miscellany with the first page of a three-page *Appeal to Academics – Share Your Nô-miso with Me and the World!* from the 740-page Monster, as-is. It has one genuine *kyôka*, an old one that genuflects on the genre. It is appropriate for two reasons not made explicit. The first is that *kyôka* itself is not mentioned. That demonstrates the fact that it is part of the Way of Waka. The second is that despite being a simple poem, it is horribly hard to interpret. That demonstrates why your translator, who is terribly unsure of his reading, needs and wants help from his betters. The Appeal ends with a *kyôka* by the same, writing under his *aka* 敬愚 Keigu, or, Respectfool, capacity. One benefit of reading and translating mad poems is that they are *catching*.

ふみしらはめくらもへびにおちつへし しらねはやすき和歌の道かな 盲人 私可多咄  
*fumi shira wa mekura mo hebi ni ochitsu beshi shiraneba yasuki waka no michi kana môjin*  
 treading know-not-as-for blind+emph.snake-with relax-ought know-not-when easy waka-way! 17c

Ignorance is bliss – *as they who no snakes seeing can relax,*  
*Knowing naught is why today, The Way of Waka is a snap!*

(耳>  
 // )  
 IL

~~~~~  
 In e-mail, my namesake has a red breast and asterisk eye, *this* robin is all ears, or *ear* 耳 at any rate. Ironically, the “L” foot will not allow me to look in the usual direction we draw faces, left. Basic Font effects surely should include a mirror option – and 90-degree turn – which would vastly improve font as a drawing tool, i.e. *fun!*
 ~~~~~

~~~~~  
 Ignorance is bliss – *as we who no snakes seeing can relax,*
Knowing naught is why, for me, even waka can be hacked!
 ~~~~~

~~~~~  
 Ignorance is bliss – indeed, *seeing no snakes, I can relax*
&, knowing nothing, walk the Way of Waka – me, a hack!
 ~~~~~

Môjin, *blind-man* is a pseudonym. “Blind-snake” (盲蛇 *mekura hebi*) i.e., “The blind do not fear things like snakes” (盲蛇物に怖じず *mekura hebi mono ni ojizu*) is the Sinosphere’s version of “ignorance is bliss,” usually Japanesed *shiranu ga hotoke*, or “not knowing is Buddhahood,” which to my warped mind is quite funny, for if you are bitten by a snake, you might, indeed, become a corpse, commonly called a Buddha, or *hotoke*! Depending on context, the poem could be general self-deprecation of all informally engaged in *kyôka*, (less likely) a caustic put-down of another’s sally into *waka*, or a disclaimer of expertise with respect to *waka* by the author, the last of which is fitting for your translator who dragged out hundreds of *waka* – intertwined with and, perhaps, one with *kyôka* – in *this* book. His translated old *haiku* got *almost no critical reaction*, which is to say, input from superior readers in the field; but now that he treads not on snakes but sacred *waka* territory, i.e., messing with a genre of poetry many take seriously, he expects and *hopes* for plenty of criticism. (Do not be shy. *Send it to me! Show me* where I err. *Show me* where you can do better. But, please, take care to write well. If your argument holds water, it will become a gloss – *with your name on it* – in the next edition.)

A *kyôka* written upon consideration of the popular etymology of the Japanese word for ‘language’ or ‘word,’ *kotoba*, 言葉.  
 古も今もかわらぬ羊歯目や心の種をのこす言の葉

*If “words are leaves,” leaving seeds that sprout in the mind,*  
*We who write are humble ferns and not the flowering kind.*



# How Mad, Mad Translation?

~~~~~  
Half of an essay on translation beyond the pale from the 740-page *Monster*, with its *waka* examples supplemented by an additional page with a *kyôka* example.
~~~~~

“Anything that works justifies itself, *ipso facto*.”

Edwin A Cranston, on translation (in *Waka* vol.1)

I tried to keep my translations translations. Though I took extraordinary license, in this book, I did not, on the whole, *paraverse*, which is to say, create alternative poems based on but not following the original, as I do in *A Dolphin in the Woods*. For an example of what I did *not* do – at least, not often – here is *Manyôshû* (8c) song #3810:

味飯乎 水尔醸成 吾待之 代者曾無<无> 直尔之不有者 # 3810  
味飯を水に醸みなしわが待ちし 代はさね<かつて>なし直にしあらねば  
*umaihi o mizu ni kaminashi waga machishi kai wa sane-nashi tada ni shi araneba*  
(tasty-rice+acc water-w/ chewed/fermented i waited, value-as-for not directly is-not-if)

*To Think I Could've  
Given It to Someone Else  
(or even drunken it myself)*

~~~~~  
What a waste of good saliva,
rice and water chewed for you
while I waited, it turned sour
And *now* you tell me
we are through!

Now that certainly *seems* like a mad poem – and you may see even madder paraverses in *A Dolphin In The Woods* (2009), but the original, I am afraid, is closer to Cranston's “*It did me no good / To ferment the tasty rice, / Brewing with water, / Waiting for you – none at all. / For you're not here to have it.*” Since *kamu* can mean chew as well as ferment, and women in old Japan did chew sweet-rice and spit it into vats to start the fermentation, mentioning *chewing* is conservative enough. What takes my translation beyond the pale, besides the unique length of the lines, is the misleadingly risqué title, “good saliva” to accent the waste, souring wine alluding to the relation-ship (English, not Japanese idiom), and the last two sentences turning an editor's note into the punch-line.

In *this* book, I resisted the urge to explain within the poems, preferring outside glosses to give readers the pleasure of rereading poems while making the connections themselves; but I often went as far as any modern translator to make sense of what I translated, and farther, for, as I have declared in all my books of translation, my policy is that *if I must err, let me do it the side of wit*, for, speaking as one who has also been translated myself, to be misread yet thought witty is preferable to being turned into a bore by a cowardly translator. I am sure I made some poems mad that were not so in the original, but in most cases, I only did whatever was needed to ensure they were *still* mad in translation.

~~~~~  
Another example that is not a recognized mad poem but a plain *waka* from a major collection will make another point about mad poem translation:

あらを田をあらすきかへしても人の心を見てこそやまめ 古今集  
*araoda o arasuki kaeshi kaeshite mo hito no kokoro o mite koso yamame* kks # 817  
new-plot/paddy+acc mattock turn turning-even person's heart+acc see +emph. quit!

Note how different these translations by Cranston (*Waka 2a*) and Rodd+Henkenius (*Kokinshû*), respectively, are:

*To make new paddy / Sink your mattock in the soil / Over and over /  
Turn the heart of a lover, / Look close – and love will wilt.* = Cranston

~~~~~  
*in newly opened / fields they turn the earth again / and again I'll not /
give up until I've seen his / heart laid open as often* = Rodd & Henkenius

This poem first appeared in the Sarumaru anthology (猿丸集) with a preface about his calling on a fickle or unfaithful woman in the spring, but according to KKS annotator Kyûsojin, said anthology is unreliable, so we cannot fault R & H for “his heart.” But, what does “see his heart laid open” mean? Cranston, who plays safe with the genderless “lover,” has the poem express “contemptuous disillusion,” but is that clear from his good but impersonal translation? It only makes me recall Ovid’s prescriptions for falling out of love by having us look close, real close at the human body and its various functions. And I wonder *why* anyone would write a stand-alone poem to tell people that looking inside(?) under(?) a lover’s heart will make love wilt. Kyûsojin’s reading 歌意 is: *After trying time again to ascertain that person’s real intentions, I’m going to cleanly quit (loving? calling?).* He also writes the conjugation of “quit” shows “intent.” Unfortunately, the tenses and intentions just do not jive. I know little grammar, but I do know awkward logic when I see it.

◎ **My point:** for *waka* or *kyōka* to be interesting, we must be bold enough to *create* clear meaning. Let me try to demonstrate what this means:

*With a new plot, you must turn the soil over and over;
We may part, but first I'll sink my mattock in her heart!*

~~~~~  
*With a new plot, we turn the soil over & over; but try  
That with a human heart and you'll watch love die.*

~~~~~  
*With a new plot, you turn the earth over & over; I'd try
That with her fickle heart – Is love a weed? Let it die!*

~~~~~  
*Turn o'er the soil the more times the better for a new paddy,  
Try that with a lover's heart & you'll lose your sugar-daddy.*

~~~~~  
*With a new plot, we may turn the earth over again and again;
But if you saw the underside of his heart, he's dirt: ditch him!*

~~~~~  
*With a new plot, we turn the earth o'er & o'er – Give up?  
Until I've seen his heart laid bare as often, no, I will not!*

And *I* will not give up on trying to bare and share wit in translation (“translation” includes Japanese modern translations 現代訳, 歌意 meant to explain poems, which often do little better than your usual English readings). Let me give two more examples of poems witty enough to be mad, though remain bonafide *waka* as they deal, sincerely, with love.

*wagimoko ga kozarishi yoi no uchiwabite waga tamakura o ware zo shite neshi*  
my sis/girlfrnd came-not night's miserable my gem-pillw I+emph. doing slept kkrj #3250

*On that evening,  
when my dear girl did not come,  
utter was my grief;*

*It was mine that was the arm  
I used as a pillow for my sleep.*

*On that night,  
my baby failed to show  
I was so upset,*

*I laid my head upon my arm,  
and, with myself, I slept!*

I apologize for not justifying Cranston's translation, left, with each line capitalized. For comparison, I wanted the same format. Unquestionably, his translation has more life to it than most. It boasts an interesting emphatic phrase in “*It was mine that was the arm*” and a good vowel end-rhyme in “*grief/sleep*.” That is *much* more service than one usually gets from a translator in a world that expects so little of a translation. But, I still could not help but feel *the original was more risqué*. *Tamamakura*, or gem (precious/ beautiful)-pillow, has erotic implications that do not come through in *pillow* alone (unless, like David Allen Coe's country song, said pillow is



stained). So, I dropped that *pillow* for space to allow the poet to sleep *with himself*, an obvious allusion to perverting the normal behavior of sleeping with *another*. Because Japanese does not specify second-person, my first reading had “you failed to show, *girl*” for the second line, but the “girl” upset my mother, so I slyly rewrote with a gender-neutral but even more diminutive term of endearment.

*hiru wa naki yoru wa moete zo nagarauru hotaru mo semi mo wa ga mi narikeri* tsurayuki  
day-as-for crying night-as-for burning! flowing firefly and cicada+emph. myself become/s\_kkrj 4015

Crying in the day, / Burning in the night I go / Down the endless years;  
Firefly and cicada are / Embodiments of myself. trans. Cranston

~~~~~  
*Crying my days, burning my nights away, I've come to see
The firefly and cicada – they are, ultimately, me.*

~~~~~  
*Crying all day and burning all night, I drift along;  
The cicada and the fireflies are me: this is our song.*

~~~~~  
*Burning nights & tear-soaked days, always astream
Both firefly and cicada, my life is but a dream!*

~~~~~  
*Crying by day & burning by night, I float, I flame;  
Firefly and cicada, in me, become the same.*

Here, the flowing in the original does allude to the poet's life as Cranston elaborates – “endless years” is added – in his fine translation – “*embodiments*” is also clever for *waga mi* is both the *self* and the *body* – but it is impossible to properly credit Tsurayuki for combining a bug that cries thereby alluding to a river of tears that float, or carry-off the crier and lightning bugs with their burning that stood for passion within an English translation. Tsurayuki managed to combine them by crying himself a river to float down as he burned, but to grasp the appropriate nature, or natural fitness of the combined conceit, we need to know that the firefly was *strongly associated with streams in Japan*. How much so? Enough that there are *waka* where water splashing becomes sparks and, centuries later, Issa – punning on the homophone for *shallows/rapids* and *back* (both are *se*) – even joked in haiku that they were moxa-combustion treatment for ole man river's back! I could not communicate that world of associations and tried to compensate in translations mad enough to become paraverses rather than readings of the original.

The problem, in short, is that if we do not add something, the loss in translation is so great that all who appreciate the genius of the original themselves feel like crying a river, jumping in and throwing away the towel. That *is* bad, isn't it!

~~~~~

~~~~~  
 Two final examples of poems that cannot be properly yet well translated. One is a *kyôka*; one a *kyôshi*. We have seen such cases where the loss in translation was made up in one way or another, but these are poems where it could not be. Rather, the solution was paraversing: “Analogous translation” of either the content or failing that, the rhetorical device/s.  
 ~~~~~

雀どのおやどはどこかしらねどもちよっちょとござれさゝの相手に 蜀山人
suzume-dono no oyado wa doko ka shiranedomo choccho to gozare sasa no aite ni shokusanjin
 sparrow-sir's dwelling-as-for where know-not but a bit/a nip have+pol. drink=bamboo companion-as

*My dear Mr. Sparrow
 I have no idea at all
 where you reside;
 But won't you join me
 for a drink, here or inside?*

*You hungry titmice,
 Stop cheeping for more;
 don't quarrel, be nice!
 Cheep! Cheep? Not quite!
 Bird-feed just went up in price!*

The above, left, rhymes Blyth's translation (*My dear Mr. Sparrow, / I have no idea / Where you reside, / But won't you just come / And have a drink with me?*). Imagining Shokusanjin sitting on the thin veranda that skirts most old Japanese houses, allowed “*here or inside.*” The *sasa* in the original means both “a drink,” one of the etymologies of which is “*Come on!*” – echoed in the *cho'cho*, *i.e.*, “just a moment” and “just a wee bit” – as in soliciting one for a drink together (another etymology has it short for “*sake,*” repeated), and the tiny bamboo, sometimes translated as *sasa* grass, where this bird was typically depicted. Thus, it pun-answers what the poet supposedly does not know! Blyth once noted in respect to Cock Robin, within a larger essay on the fallacy of the so-called anthropomorphic fallacy that the *Sparrow* had to have shot the *arrow*. Rhyme's reason is undeniable. My point is that pun is equally or more convincing and if it is lost in translation must be replaced with something. The above right, recording what I observed at the feeder just out my window and in the farm supply store where my sister repeatedly complained about the rise in the price of sunflower and other bird-seeds, managed to keep the familiar address of a bird and a pun, but lost the plot. That set me to thinking of a more closely analogous pun.

*My dear Mr. Fox, I've no idea at all where lies your den;
 But, do join me for a nip? And, why not bring the Vixen?*

The “nip” together with the need to rhyme-justify the “den” required the fox. True, fewer foxes come inside than sparrows. But, Issa did leave New Year presents at fox dens and a *tanuki* (raccoon-faced fox) once jumped through my window landing right on my desk, so it seems perfectly normal to *me*. And *nip* also has the same friendly feeling of the

cho'cho to (just a wee bit/little while) which is not only psychologically apt in a general sense, but for evoking the small jerky movements and chirps of the sparrow in particular. A crow can mean an old gentleman dressed in black, but a crow would never be invited to drink *cho'cho to*. (rather, an interrogatory *~ka* expanded to a *~kaa!* after *caw!*). My question for the reader is this: could one say the witty fox poem is closer to the original poem than the lame translations (Blyth's or mine) of the sparrow? And, how valid is an analogous reading as translation? (If the poem is in a story and the narrative is not hurt by making a sparrow a fox . . .)

~~~~~

*Wan wan wan wan mata wan wan. / Mata mata wan wan mata wan wan /*

腕々々々亦腕々。	<i>Rough! Rough! Rough! Rough! Again, Rough! Rough!</i>
亦亦腕々又腕々。	<i>Again! Again! Rough! Rough! Again, Rough! Rough!</i>
夜暗何足頓不分。	<i>In the dark of night, I couldn't tell the number of mutts,</i>
始終只聞腕々々。	<i>From start to finish, I just heard Rough! Rough! Rough!</i>

This Chinese-style mad verse, or *kyôshi*, by Gubutsu\* 愚佛 (in 狂詩古今狂歌大全), or Silly-Buddha, titled dog-bite-meet 犬咬合, or, *The Dog Fight*, has been called an example of proto-Dadaism in Japanese poetry by a Princeton Encyclopedia that wrongly credited it to Shokusanjin. The Chinese character used for the barking, or ruff-ruffing does not mean “rough” but “bowl.” Be that as it may, if dogs were barking to be fed so the “bowl” became significant as punning mimesis, we would at least have *doggerel*, but this is not even up to *mutterel*. With about fifteen minutes of work, however, it was easy enough to work the *ruff=rough* idea into a mad exchange in English:

Tom Cat said, “*Dog, you have such an eeeasy life!  
Your Wives don't scratch, they only bite – Meow!*”

“*Tom,*” said Mutt, “*Who is free to play all night?  
I've a Master to obey! I have it rough! Ruff! Ruff!*”

The “cheap, cheap” cheeping titmice was analogous to the original in terms of rhetorical device and kept the bird, but this, where even a cat is brought into the picture, is not even a paraverse of the original. It is no more than a new poem born of the idea of punning on the stereotypical sound our pets make.

Your translator, who has, aside from translating one novel, no experience with fiction, had never composed anything remotely like it until he struggled with *kyôka* and *kyôshi* for *Mad In Translation*.

## Mad Bios – a section taken as-is from the *Irregular Biography of The 740-page Monster*

**Piet Hein** (Honorary Mad Poet) 1905-1996/4/17. Short philosophical rhymes called *gruks* or *grooks* by Piet Hein, Danish scientist/mathematician/ designer-poet – best known for his super-eggs as large as the Stockholm traffic circle or as small as the balanceable gold and silver eggs used as ice-cubes and various board games – were popular in English translation in the 1960's and 70's, but, unfortunately, seldom seen today. Unlike Ogden Nash's poems, many dated by detail, grook humor is largely logical and a good selection of them will read as well a thousand years from now as today. The shortest is "*Co-existence, or No existence*" (though it also has an interesting title), and all come with an elegantly simple line-drawing. Hein inscribed the 1979 printing of the 1968 book *Runaway Runes* for me as follows: *I've tried to Haiku, / You, Robin Gill, should try too / With your Hai I.Q.!* The pun is less haiku than *kyôku*, but decades down the road, with my brain considerably shrivelled, I took him up on it. Perhaps the same year – I have misplaced the letter – he informed me he went by train, from the new capital to the old one – *Tokyotokyotokyotokyotokyotokyoto*. That is a masterpiece with both a perfect mimesis of rail-travel and a simple yet surprising wordplay with the snapper saved for the last syllable. It deserves to be at least as famous as van den Heuvel's one word haiku (*tundra*). At the time, I knew he first became famous writing under a pen name during the German Occupation, but not *how* it worked. Now, I read that "*Losing one glove / is certainly painful, / but nothing / compared to the pain, / of losing one, / throwing away the other, / and finding / the first one again*" was a cryptic message for the Danes not to collaborate, for liberation would come. If I did not catch that, who knows how many Japanese *kyôka* I likewise have failed to pick up on! Piet Hein's *kyôka* sense is felt in his wordplay, such as the above examples or when he confesses about his country Denmark that ". . . we have no raw materials. / We have no power. / We have know how," and in his hyper-logical concepts, such as when he finds *no cow a horse* and *no horse a cow* is "*one similarity, anyhow,*" or confesses that *we ought to live each day as if it were our last below*, but as a senior he knows that doing so would have killed him *long ago*, and makes a halo into a horizon (title: *circum-scripture* (!)) . . . Were it not for concern for copyright (I have no time to properly edit now, much less seek permissions), I would serve up a dozen of his grooks entire, right here, for poems that are conceptual rather than descriptive or narrative – except in so far that plotting to keep the snapper at the tail – are all too rare in popular literature today, and the grooks would provide a convenient mirror on *kyôka*. I say "convenient" not the "only" because a broad search of meta-physical (I have only pulled some poems from Herrick here) and other 16-19c English poetry, especially anything called "epigram," will

provide many more matches but it takes some doing to find enough good short ones, while the grooks are, for the most part, already mad, as I define it. Here is one example of a *kyôka* (epigram) by Swift:

Behold! a proof of *Irish* sense;  
 Here *Irish* wit is seen!  
 When nothing's left that's worth defense,  
 We build a magazine.

A footnote explained that old Swift, driving out with his physician, observed a new building and asked what it was designed for. Told that it “was a magazine for arms and powder,” upon which he wrote this into his pocket-book. This reminds me of the *rakushu*, or political lampoon sort of mad poem. Anyone with time and access to the Old English Poetry data base is welcome to try to find English language ‘matches’ for the *kyôka* in this book.

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**Ryôkan** 良寛 1758-1831. Ryôkan came from a family rich enough to have helped his talent blossom into a lucrative career as a popular *haikai* master (paid by students for hosting parties and judging, etc.) in the city, but he chose to become a Zen monk and live in a remote village, where he wrote poetry in various traditional and invented styles. While witty, he was remarkably mellow. While my impression is based on the limited number of his poems I could find on-line, I read enough to note that they tend to make us smile. The downside is that we rarely laugh aloud; the upside is that none of his poems leave us with a sour taste. Until I find and read *all* of his poetry, I cannot say whether we will find many more excellent mad poems such as the charming wingless *tôfu* (pg.86). My favorite of his poems seen to date is a *tanka* (one that seems too modern to call a *waka* but too sincere to call a *kyôka*) on plants he evidently neglected to water “*Plucking violets / by the roadside – Ah! / my potted plants! / I forgot all about them, / my poor potted children!*” (道のべの莖つみつ鉢の子を忘れてぞ來し其の鉢の子を *michinobe no sumire tsumi-tsutsu hachinoko o wasuretezo kishi sono hachinoko o*). He had many versions of this, mentioning they are pitiful in one and there is no one who will take (and care for?) them in another. Such paraversing proves it must have been a favorite of his, too. Here is another bluesy favorite in a style similar to that of Issa:

*ware danimo mada kuitaranu shira-gayu no soko ni mo miyuru kagebôshi kana*  
 i/me+emph too still eat-suffices-not clear-soup's bottom-on even see-can shadow-monk!

*‘I, too, have yet to eat my fill!’ – Yes, in my gruel,  
 Even my shadow looks so hungry it could drool.”*

He may have gotten the idea partly from the *Tales of Ise*, where a woman as she is about to wash her face looks into the tub and laments to see another as blue as her, but his wording does not at all reflect that. In other words, the poem has zero intent to be a parody. An overly fine point, perhaps, but I think it neatly sums up Ryôkan's relation-ship to the world of poetry. He is not alone, but he is independent. Burton Watson writes that Ryôkan "*stands in magnificent isolation from all contemporary schools and poetic theories, drawing inspiration from the eccentric T'ang Buddhist poet Han-shan and writing poetry that blithely ignores many of the technical dictates of traditional Chinese verse.*" I would guess he also read 17c *kyôka*. Keene writes of his poems that "*all of this is endearing, but Ryôkan's poetry seems to belong to Japan rather than to the world.*" Would he write that today, when *sushi* and *tôfu*, even without wings, have made it to the world's supermarkets and haiku has come to be increasingly well-known? The *kyôka*, or should I say, conceptual part of his work seems universal enough to me!

~~~~~  
Saigyô 西行 (1118-90). Born into a low-ranking clan, he became a monk in his early twenties, when he spent much of his time in the Capital. Later, he spent most of his life as a traveling ascetic or sage-hermit, remaining in touch with the top high-ranking court poet, Fujiwara no Shunzei (see Shunzei). His confidence, as a powerful man skilled in martial arts and an extraordinarily creative thinker, is reflected in his bold poetry. While he loved poetic conceits and punning – the very first poem in his *Sankashû* anthology takes the question posed by the first song of the *Kokinshû* (905) on what to call the year on the solar spring when it precedes the lunar New Year and, adding *rain* to the mix, makes what on first sight seems only the verb for rain "*falling=furu*" pivot into the adjective "*Old=furu*" (春としもなほおもはれぬ心かな雨ふる年のここちのみして *haru to shi mo nao . . .*) to modify the *Year*. I assume it really rained, too, as from start to finish – Saigyô's poetry is well-grounded in reality, physical or psychological. His world was a large one, and he wore his melancholy on his sleeve with grace: "*When you think / you alone know the blues, / You find another / and want to go to China / to pay him a visit!*" (我ばかりもの思ふ人や又もあると唐土までも尋ねてしがな *ware bakari mono omou hito ya mata mo aru to tôdô made mo tazunete shi gana*). And that world was also small, in the best sense of the word: "*Waking alone from sleep on my straw mat, my tears are drawn by a cricket's song.*" (ひとりねの寝ざめの床のさむしろに涙催すきり／＼すかな *hitori-ne no nezame no toko no samushiro ni namida moyôsu kirigirisu kana*). While the cricket's delicate chirp has an irregular grain and plaintive tone that affects me far more deeply than the controlled bellowing and shrieking of opera appreciated by people with a

different sensibility than mine, my tears were drawn by a different insect, the bell cricket, whose name, *higurashi*, or “day-darkening” relegated it to evenings in poetry. I very rarely cry for anything but a cold wind and the fact the floodgates were opened by a dawn chorus and Saigyô mentions *waking from sleep* proves to me that he is putting personal *discoveries* (not the same as trope or confessions) into poetry, something all too rare. He has 94 poems in the *Shinkokinshû* (1205), more than any other poet.

~~~~~  
**Sanekata.** 藤原実方 Fujiwara no ~ 958?-998. His boldness is extraordinary, or at the very least, extraordinary to have come down to us, thanks to his being well-connected; but he is not so unerring a poet as the other Casanova poet, Narihira, for his metaphors are often sloppy. One telling example: 葉をしげみゝやまのかげやまがふらむあくるもしらぬひぐらしの聲 実方歌集 *ha shigemi miyama no kage ya magauramu* . . . . When evening cicada sing at daybreak, he claims it is caused by the thick mountain underbrush keeping them from knowing it ever dawned. Actually, *higurashi*, contrary to their name, *always* cry at dawn as well as dusk. Nobleman who stayed up late would probably fall asleep shortly before they cried and might be pardoned for not knowing that, but considering the fact these evening cicada do not continue singing once it becomes dark, the poem falls apart. Yet, this carelessness – it still beats kks #204! – may be what made a large percent of his work (and I have only seen some online at the site where I first learned of him, there might be more) *kyôka*. I gave him two chapters mostly to hint at the size of the mother lode of *kyôka* by whatever name it was written or published.

~~~~~  
Shikibu 和泉式部 (Izumi Shikibu c.970-1030). Not *Murasaki* Shikibu, author of *The Tale of Genji* whose hundreds of *waka*, while often witty, are so in context of the novel and too subtle for the logic-in-your-face *kyôka*. This Shikibu, who had far more poems, 67, in the *Goshuishû* (1086), than any other poet – over twice as much as the top male Monk Nôin’s 31, plays with logic in ways that make many of her *waka* seem like *kyôka* or something close. “The nameless book” (*Mumyo-zôshi* c1200), probably authored by Shunzei’s Daughter (actually grand-daughter), raves “It’s hard to believe that, though a woman, Izumi Shikibu composed so many excellent poems. It may be due to some karma she acquired from a previous life, for I can’t imagine such talent springing from the present world.” (trans. Michele Marra). To my mind, she is to *waka* what Chiyo is to *haikai*. I put dozens of never-before Englished haiku by Chiyo in *Cherry Blossom Epiphany* because I never tire of her wit. In this book, I tried to do the same with Shikibu’s *waka*, but I am not as much at home in *waka* as I am in *haikai*, so I can only cross my fingers and hope I got most right! Most of the examples describe the high boundary of *kyôka*, which

is to say they are *waka* with a touch of mad spirit in my opinion. Two I missed that are in Carter make my point. The first (*tsurezure to sora zo miraruru omou hito ama kudarikomu mono naranaku ni*), borrows considerably from his fine translation, the second, only the caption and first word.

*My idle eyes turn to the sky,
Though it's not as if the man I wait for
will descend from heaven!*

~~~~~  
◎ written when pondering the uncertainty of the world ◎

Being someone not a soul will miss – while I am here,  
Should I say it? “*Alas, poor Shikibu, I knew her well!*”

*shinobu beki hito mo naki mi wa aru ori ni aware aware to ii ya okamashi*  
miss/mourn-ought people evn not persn/self-as4, is/exist time-in pitifl pitifl say put should?

~~~~~  
Shokusanjin 蜀山人 1749-1823. Also, **Yomo no Akara**. 生名大田長次郎。成人名大田覃（おおた・ふかし）は、雅号を南畝、狂詩号寝惚先生、狂歌号四方赤良、狂歌第二号、そして長年使ったから首数の多い号は蜀山人で、それで行く。狂歌以外の分野で最も一般的に通用性あるは、大田南畝。Born into a poor samurai family, Ôta Chôjirô, commonly called **Ôta Nanpo/ Nampo**, his general purpose *nome de plume*, wrote mad *waka*, or *kyôka*, and mad Chinese verse, or *kyôshi* from his teens, first publishing as Yomo no Akara 四方赤良 for the former and Neboke Sensei 寝惚先生, Professor (or Doctor) Sleepy-head, for the latter. As Yomo no Akara, he edited and published the book that started the Tenmei *kyôka* boom at the same time Kisshû (see above), did his. Unlike Kisshû's anthology arranged the easy way, by author, his anthology arranged by season, theme, and *je ne sais quoi* was a resounding success. It was published on New Year of Tenmei 3 and when he held a party for his mother in the third month of that year, celebratory *kyôka* came from more than 180 people! Edo's *kyôka* boom was on! Later, he would adopt the name Shokusanjin. In this book, as a rule, I use the name used by my sources. The baldest and boldest expression of his philosophy of life is probably this:

世の中は色と酒とが敵なり どうぞ敵にめぐりあいたい（述懐）
yononaka wa iro to sake to ga kataki nari dôzo kataki ni meguriaitai
world-as-for color/sex and sake the enemies are, please enemies+dat. meet-want

*Sex and sake, our enemies, are what all men must face –
Blessed it is to have such foes I would, instead, embrace!*

*In this world, sex and drink are said to be man's foes
That I could be so lucky to have such foes in droves!*

Had politics not turned conservative and forced him to retire from an active and, as he would put it, *snowballing*, literary career, allegedly because of his being a friend of a man executed for corruption/political reasons and for suspicion of writing lampoons he never admitted to writing – actually, I would guess, to nip-off a potential threat in the bud – he would have become wealthy as a poet-editor, for his wit was intelligent yet open to all and his editorial and inter-class organizational skills extraordinary. I have not seen enough of his *kyôshi* (Chinese style mad poems) to judge, but he is generally credited with making both minor genres of mad poetry into major ones. I think *kyôka* was so popular under Teiryû *et al* in Ôsaka, that it may be more a matter of making it *equally* popular in the capital city, but Shokusanjin's poems are so delightfully fresh – and so many of Teiryû's all too predictable – that it is tempting to credit him with *everything*. While I have published some of Shokusanjin's old-age and poverty complaints in this book, he was not dirt-poor like yours truly. He could afford to enjoy nights out attending plays with his mistresses right up to his death. The real tragedy of his relative lack of wealth was that it forced him to work and kept him from retiring, thereby depriving him of the opportunity to concentrate on the arts full time. That poverty was a crime, for considering his high scores on the civil service exams, he deserved a much higher post. But such, like most good ambassadorial assignments in Usania, depended not upon accomplishments but on the pull of the wealth he did not enjoy. 蛇足「たとひ時うつりうまごと去り、楽しみ悲しみ行き交ふとも、天さへ酔へる花の朝、頭もふらつく月の夕、雨の降る日も雪の夜も、日々酔ふて泥の如く、一年三百六十日、一日も此君無かる可けんや」。(蜀山家集の前の経歴の中で金子曰く「四方の留糟」の此君盃の記).

Shôzan 嘯山 1718-1801. Nothing of his is in this book; but, believe me, *any* haikai master who lives into his 80's wrote plenty of *kyôka*. It is not because they did so after becoming senile but because people full of good humour live long. His haiku in 葎亭集 reveal a mind not shy of conceptual wit and I expect that if I ever get to see his *unedited* poems 葎亭賛集 (not yet in print) there will be *kyôku* galore and maybe a cache of *kyôka*. Because haiku researchers discard *kyôka* and *kyôka*, and *kyôka* researchers (such as there are) do not research *haikai* poets not, like Teitoku, officially into *kyôka*, my guess is that most of the best (those I would like, at any rate) *kyôka* have not yet to be type-faced!

Shunzei 皇太后宮大夫俊成 1114-1204. This master of the grand empress's household office and father of Fujiwara no Teika famed for choosing the *Hundred Poets One Poem* Collection may well be the greatest kyôka poet before Shokusanjin. I say that judging from the small sampling I have come across here and there that indicate a diverse subject matter and extraordinary wit. I hope to find more of his poems and give him a chapter or two. Meanwhile, here is another of his poems. It is from the "sea" *umi* section of the 1333 *Fuboku* 夫木 collection, every bit as sophisticated a trick as anything Shokusanjin et al came up with. I tried (*Every river has a head, but flowing all end up at sea; Such headless equality, no gods but the Buddhahead!*) but am afraid it cannot be Englished, for the pivotal pun of upriver=*kami*=gods leading us to the ocean, which having no such upriver or *kami* is the Atman or Buddhahead, would be utterly lost in passage (川は皆なかれいりては海なれはうみはかみなきほとけなりけり俊成 紙園社百首川 *kawa wa mina nagare-irite wa umi nareba umi wa kami naki hotoke narikeri shunzei* 蛇足：川上のかみ⇒神。仏を海と見立てるのを、あったかも説話 just-so story!).

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**Sôchô** 宗長 1448-1532. This monk and link-verse master was student of the witty link-verse master Sôgi. He is, together with Teitoku, the only notable link-verse master included in *Kyôka Taikan* (Broadview) and, thanks to Mack Horton, his wit is known in the English-speaking world. One particularly sexy sequence Horton translates includes the following 17-14 syllabet poem (which I borrow with changes such as improper enjambment for rhyme, and a hint at one missed pun) shows his skilled wordplay:

*ware yori mo seitaka wakashu machiwabite + fudô mo koi ni kogarasu mi ka*

*How he waits & waits for the lad Seitaka, who stands above  
 Himself – Fudô, unmoving, burns with his unrequited love!*

Cetaka (sk) an attendant of Acala (sk) is called Seitaka in Japanese. That is homophonous with tall (setaka or seitaka). Acala (sk) is called Fudô, literally "un-moving." That is not explained in the poem, but as it was the one thing (burning for love though not moving – if you recall, men like cats literally moved around for love) overlooked in Horton's otherwise satisfying and generous notes, . . . Horton does point out that this vulcan god is always depicted with a nimbus of flames, which makes this a good facetious just-so. Note that, as this is link-verse, right and left of my hyphen are separate lines by separate poets and the first could only refer to a tall young-crowd (gay youth) and only becomes the name of the attendant with the clever cap, which I guess is by Sôchô, though the link-

verse session had six or seven participating and individual lines are not credited. I would bet there are more sources for Sôchô *kyôka* than the collections translated by Horton and given in *Kyôka Taikan*.

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Sôgi 宗祇 1420-1502. Judging from his *hokku*, or haiku, Sôgi has far more wit than the only adjective that ever graces his name, “orthodox,” might suggest. That is why my *Cherry Blossom Epiphany* has scores of his haiku. I have not yet read any collections or journals of his and the only 31-syllabet poem of his in this book is one moralistic *kyôka*. One reason I suspect there are *kyôka* riches out there to be found is an exchange with Sôchô found in one of the 28 episodes from Anrakuan Sakuden’s 1,000+ anecdote *Seisuishô* (1623) or *Laughs to Banish Sleep*, translated by H. Mack Horton. You may find it beautifully laid out over two pages in the booklet published as part of an episodic festschrift for Howard Hibbett by Highmoonoon Press (2001). Here, I’ll deparse and despace with slashes and equal signs, but otherwise leave it without my usual interference because it is perfect as is to reveal Sôgi’s playfulness:

Strained Etymologies (1.1.5) [Title] // One evening when Sôgi and his disciple Sôchô were walking on the beach, they came upon a fisherman hauling in nets covered with seaweed. // “What do you call that?” they asked. / The fisherman replied, “Some say *me*, some say *mo*.” / “That would make a good *renga* link” Sôgi remarked, and he composed this: // *me to mo iu nari / mo to mo iu nari* = *Some say me, Some say mo*. // He then asked Sôchô to provide a rejoinder. Sôchô composed the following: // *hikitsurete / nogai no ushi no / kaerusa ni* = *Leading home / oxen that were / out to pasture*. // Female oxen make the sound *unme* when they low, and male oxen, *unmo*. Sôgi was impressed. // Then Sôchô asked his master for a verse in return. Sôgi composed this: *yomu iroha / oshiyuru yubi no / shita o miyo* = *Look beside the finger / that points to those syllables / in the iroha*. // *Me* comes after the *yu* of *yubi* [finger] in the *iroha* syllabary, and *mo* comes after the *bi*. (Ibid)

Iroha is the famous syllabary poem and, as Horton explains in his notes, the lack of diacritics allows the syllabet (my word) *hi* ひ to also be read *bi* び. Somewhere else in this book I mentioned not borrowing this episode as I quoted Horton’s wee booklet too much already, but not imagining any better proof of Sôgi’s ability to have written extraordinary *kyôka* than this, could not help myself. This is the sort of odd associative leap that marks the best work of Shokusanjin. If it turns out to have been apocryphal, brewed by “the Kyôto abbot and tea connoisseur Anrakuen Sakuden (1554-1642)” well, so be it. In that case, *his kyôka* need to be ferreted out. And, here, by the way, is #351 of 360 *kyôka* from *Laughs to Banish Sleep* 醒睡笑 collected in *Broadview* 狂歌大観 参編:

我物とほしさのまゝにたてのみて 夜尿しの田の森の茶坊主 宗祇
waga mono to hoshisa no mama ni tade nomite yobari shi no ta no mori no chabôzu sôgi
 my thing so desiring-as nettle drinking night-pissing-doing's plot's woods' tea-monk

*Free to drink all the piss-a-bed I wish, and 'tis no crime
 to go at anytime for a monk in the woods of Shinoda
 if called would love to steep a fox in rhyme!*

*Tea-toady me!
 Out thru' the woods I trip
 at night to pee;*

*Pissabed I chug not sip:
 Even serving, old is free!*

*It's all mine and
 yes, I am free as 'some
 prefer nettles;'*

*To go out at night & piss
 whatever's in the kettle*

*Some prefer nettles
 I suck a lady's thumb, tea:
 so I am free to go
 When foxy nature calls me
 into the Shinoda woods at night!*

Until I read the accompanying story in *Laughs to Banish Sleep*, this is all I can do. “Doing” night-piss puns into a toponym, a place famous for a white fox that became a woman. Thanks to *haikai*, I knew *tade* tea was drunk by men as a diuretic. It made them piss rivers and may have helped with a type lumbago that swelled the balls, flushed kidney stones, relieved the prostate, killed infections or whatever. The dictionary gives over a dozen names in English and Latin, including “a lady’s thumb,” “gentleman’s cane” “kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate” and a “water pepper” (as for the W.C.?). The *tade* in idiom suggests “each to his taste,” or, “some prefer nettles.” I met a Greek on Key Biscayne who says *nettles* make a fine diuretic soup, so that, too matches! It is *not* “a piss-a-bed,” as dandelion owns that fine *aka*. Combining such tastes with ideas of free indulgence is masterful. Possible puns: *tade=tada*, i.e. *just drinking*; *yobari=yobare*, i.e., called (to Shinoda). A “tea-monk” served tea in a palace and came to mean “a toady,” so it may be meant in a self-deprecatory manner. I was tempted to introduce *monkey* for such a *monk*, but that would be too Humpty-Dumpty even for me. Combining the final self-deprecation with the initial claim to utter freedom is, again, masterful. But, I am sure that, if this really was by Sôgi, we need to try to find whatever remains of his informal poetry, for the top linkverse master may well have been the top *kyôka* master as well!

Sôkan 宗鑑 1458-1546. Monk and haikai master known for bringing link-verse down to the level of folk, he wrote many *ku* that might be called *kyôku*, such as this poorer-than- thou complaint “*No clothes for me / as the year draws to a close / this evening!*” 年くれて人物くれぬ今宵かな *toshi kurete hito mono kurenu koyoi kana*. The original uses a pun popular with *kyôka*: *kure* as “ending” and “giving.” Clothing is not specified, but was the most common gift, so I borrowed it for art’s sake. Cf., Blyth’s syntactically and semantically closer translation: “*The year draws to its close; / Nobody gives me anything / This evening.*” HK 1.). Sôkan’s single *kyôka* death verse (tell them I have business in another world) tells us more about his down-to-earth wit than all the knee-jerk Bashôite criticism of his supposed worthlessness combined. As the introduction to Jinkyû’s work (see above) mentions Sôkan next to Bokuyô as a great *kyôka* wit, I bet more can be found for another edition.

A Lonely Eve

*the year leaves
but nobody leaves
a thing to me.*

~~~~~  
Let me add that Sôkan has been treated as a worthless poet for putting handle on the moon to make a fan, where it is probable he was joking about the idea of the summer and fall moon as cooling. Also, the underlined phrase was just added, as was the final translation of the poem that finally finds a way to carry the original pun into English! Why didn’t that translation for the *kyôku* pop up before? It would seem that a year of struggling with translating mad poems bore fruit. Now, your translator must see if he can squeeze it back into the *740-page Monster*.

Hopefully, the same benefit will go to good readers!

Note that about half of the poets in this small sample are *waka* poets. They boast a larger percentage of the total poems in the *740-page Monster* than in this Reader, where clear-cut *kyôka* have been given priority.

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♪ **Saigyô**. I was tempted to remove the heading for Saigyô because the poems given are not *kyôka*. That is because most of Saigyô’s *waka* that may be found in the text of the *Monster* clearly *are* (or could be so called) and the biography aimed to create a more rounded picture of the great poet.

♪ **Sôgi**. The words “*too Humpty-Dumpty even for me.*” Humpty-Dumpty famously excused an odd usage of a word as his right to insist his words meant what he intended them to.

Mad History – a section of the *Short & Inadequate yet Extraordinarily Broad One in The 740-page Monster*

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This page from part V of the history in the back-matter of the *Monster* shows how translation may stray from original detail to near the original wit and hints at the abundant historical detail in the larger book in case anyone cares to read it.  
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While a subtle wit pervades the entire next major anthology, the *Kokinshû* (c 905), so the serious and the comic are still mixed, many of the most playful poems are segregated from the others and *named*. Book 10, titled “Thing-Names 物名,” contains *waka* with exceptionally tricky punning, acrostics, and other wordplay. Book 19, “Sundry Forms 雑体,” contains various sections with titles based on the form, i.e. number and arrangement of syllabets. The largest section has fifty seven *haikaika* 俳諧歌, or *haikai* songs, about which Kaneko wrote (and I concur), “these are beyond any doubt, what later would come to be called *kyôka*.” (此の俳諧歌はとりもなほさず後に言ふ所の狂歌である). At the same time, however, he made an important qualification. Because Shunzei, in the 12c, may have said that “*kyôka* are *haikai*” (「俳諧といふは狂歌なり」『和歌肝要』、但し仮託書らしい) before long, *haikai*, or those blowing its horn, came to claim that *haikai* were the only legitimate form of *kyôka* 後世俳諧歌のみを以て真正の狂歌であると主張した一派の人々. That, Kaneko makes clear, is mistaken. If anything, *haikai* are but one form of *kyôka* 併し俳諧歌は狂歌の一体であつて、其の凡てではない. I concur, but hasten to add that here, *haikai* does not mean the entire span of what we *now* call *haikai*, either. To the editors of the *Kokinshû*, for example, it would have meant humorous light verse, mad, perhaps, but lightly so, and written in a language as elegant as any *waka* and concerning accepted natural or cultural themes. Here is one used as an example by Kaneko:

山吹の花色衣主やたれ問へど答へず口なしにして 素性法師 古今集 905
yamabuki no hana-iro-goromo nushi ya tare toedo kotaezu kuchinashi ni shite sosei
keria flwr's colord-robe ownr-as4 who askng-but replyng-not jasmn=mouthlss-as being

*To whom belongs this cape of globe flower's pure gold?
– It must be Jasmine, for, when I ask, I am not told!*

The *owner* (*nushi*) of the globe flower (*keria* or wild rose)-colored robe is, one assumes, human, but bringing up the *jasmine* in the last half of the poem turns it into a question about the identity of the dye (remember, a flamingo pink garment did not necessarily cost a bird his life), which is answered by silence, as *jasmine* in Japanese is *kuchinashi*, or “mouthless”

by name). If you wish, you might replace *Jasmine* with *Chrysanthemum*.

*To whom belongs this Keria colored cape? – Anyone?
Aster, I'd say, for when I asked her, she stayed mum.*

Be that as it may, the poem by monk Sosei (d.909) is indeed a dyed in the wool *kyôka*, or one type of *kyôka*, the elegant artful *haikai* type. The *Kokinshû* may have *more* witty poems than the *Manyôshû*, but Kaneko's point that they cover a narrower range of topics holds water. Readers who follow evolutionary biology might think of the *Manyôshû* as *This Wonderful Life*, i.e., pre-Cambrian primary diversity, though it was not meteors or volcanoes but tight-assed editing that lopped off many thick branches of poetic memes from the official tree of Japanese literature (I know, S. J. Gould may have played up the difference; the same can be said for contrasting the *Manyôshû* and *Kokinshû*. The latter is more lively than sometimes realized. We may need to see-saw back and forth on this).

What follows is new, in lieu of a real "History"

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*History for the most part is old hat.* By presenting many poems by Yûchôrô, Getsudôkan and others who are barely asterisks in what has been written about *kyôka* to date, your translator challenges his predecessors for failing to fully appreciate 16 and 17c *kyôka* and indirectly helps to write, or rather, right history. Literary history, like natural history, is also for the most part taxing. It grows from definition. If you think all comic 31-mora Japanese poetry, serious or light, is *kyôka*, your history draws from a much broader poem pool than one allowing only *kyôka* called *kyôka*, and infinitely more vast than one limited to Tenmei era *kyôka*. Because there is no consensus about these fundamentals, *at this time*, one can contribute more to an eventual full and fair history by bringing poems to public attention – definition by demonstration – than by actually writing it. Indeed, a selection of poetry to cover a field of poetry is a definition of the same. Still, a history of *kyôka* would be nice to have.

The most thorough history to date is Kaneko Jitsuei's *Small History of Kyôka* 狂歌小史, which prefaced a collection of Shokusanjin's *kyôka* 蜀山家集 published in 1927. Kaneko took the history back long before the first appearance of the word *kyôka* connected to a literary genre (as opposed to one's own poem so called for humility's sake), championing the 8c *Manyôshû* as a hot bed of mad poetry, with the "dramatically kidding songs 劇咲歌" of book 16 deemed to be all *kyôka* 凡て狂歌." As noted above, he also found the *haikaika* of book 19 of the early-10c *Kokinshû* what would later be called *kyôka*, but felt the freedom of the *Manyôshû* was missing. He lamented the increasing exclusiveness of art poetry, as reflected by the segregation of high *waka* and low, of the serious and the comic into separate chapters for *haikai* and wordplay in the latter. I find more comic in the *Kokinshû* outside of these chapters than any one else does, but that



division did indeed grow, and was formalized in the 12c when the high form, identified with sincere feeling, was called *ushin* 有心 *ushin* (*have-heart/mind/meaning/sentiment*), while the low one, identified with the frivolous, was called 無心 (*mushin=no-heart/mind/meaning/sentiment*), and parties engaged in each were said to gather about the Persimmon-tree (*Kaki-no-moto*) or the Chestnut tree (*Kuri-no-moto*), respectively. To what extent they were different schools of poetry or different modes of poetry engaged in by the same poets – one as work and one as entertainment – is not clear. In 1191, Teika, best known as the editor of the *Hundred Poets One Poem* anthology, described an evening *kyôka* salon and a poet, or poets participating, as good at *kyôka* (「。。入夜被読上百首。事畢有当座狂歌等。深更相共帰家。(中略)有狂歌合」『明月記』建久二年の条). While comic 31-mora *waka* went back to the beginning of literacy in Japan, this was the first confirmed use of the word *kyôka* for a type of poem. While these *kyôka* were supposedly *yomisute* (read and tossed) so what happened below the Chestnut Tree stayed below the Chestnut Tree, chances are some were written down, and may eventually be found.

Judging from what *Broadview* offers, *kyôka* never died. The ten pairs of poems in a 14c work, *Cake vs. Wine Poem Match*, (*Mochi-Sake Uta-awase*) judged by prime minister Nijô Nyôbô exemplify the best spirit of light verse. Ikkyû and Chikamasa's Zen exchange, if real (not to mention other Ikkyû poems) show the mad spirit alive in 15c didactic poetry. Yûchôrô proved that outrageous poetry that was not pure Zen was possible in the 16c. The 1623 book of comic stories or miscellany by Anraku Sakuden, a wee part of which H. Mack Horton translated as *Laughs to Banish Sleep*, the 1640 anon. *Fake Ise*, or, *Nisemonogatari* parodying the *Tales* and other *kanazoshi* are full of *kyôka* and preview the diverse and unexpected associations and take-offs found in the hip? surreal? mid- and late-Edo *gesaku* low-lit, including the Tenmei era *kyôka* all too often regarded as the start of *kyôka* as a genre and the only worthwhile *kyôka* ever written. The 1643 *Four Life (types) Poem Match* 四生の歌合, with 59 pairs of elegant *kyôka* contesting the aptness romantic complaint or celebration by the respective animal or plant (bugs, birds, fish, beasts) represented, deftly judged by editor/poet? Chôshôshi 木下長嘯子 previews the best of late-18c *kyôka* in the sophistication of the poems and the ancient-style pseudonyms. While Teitoku, the leading haikai-master of the first half of the 16c, organized *kyôka* parties and published some of his own, he did not give *kyôka* his all so Mitoku's 1649 *I Sing My Collection*, the 658-poem *Gagin Wagashû* 吾吟我集, became the first large collection of *kyôka*. A top *haikai* master and wordsmith extraordinaire – fifteen of the *kyôka* are palindromes! – his *kyôka* are as sophisticated as any by the Tenmei *kyôka*-masters. His many parodies of classic *waka* and proverbs diverse than anything before (earlier parodies tended to concentrate on complete works). The first large multi-author collection of note is the 1061-poem 1666 Ancient and Contemporary Savage/ Barbarian Song/poem Collection *Kokin Ikyoku-shû* 古今夷曲集, called *Savage Poems*, in this book. This collection, like no other, proves there is a comic 31-mora poem tradition in Japan of which parody is but a small part and which includes but is not dependent on wordplay as complex – and impossible for most poets to hope to follow – as that of Mitoku (though 63 of his



poems are in it). The poems were gathered and edited by Kôfû over decades, with help from students of Teitoku and Teitoku, himself, when he was alive. Meanwhile, Bokuyô, a physician, wrote charming *kyôka* as pun-filled as those of Mitoku, but, to my mind, more endearingly personal. Keene, who, unlike me, judged Bokuyô unreadable today, credits him with promoting a taste for *kyôka* among upper-class samurai. Then, to finish-off the 17c, we have Getsudôken, a maverick noble *kyôka*-master of the following generation who may be the bawdiest poet in the history of Japan. He is well-represented in this book; no more needs to be said except that he is not well known in Japan. Teiryû, a self-consciously professional *kyôka*-master, who created what might be called a far-reaching *franchise of kyôka* based in but not limited to Ôsaka to fill the first decades of the 18c is more famous. His poems are for the most part technically good but mechanical next to Getsudôken's more personal works. Unfortunately, *Broadview's* anthology of *kyôka* publications ends about 1740 and the other material I have starts in the early 1780's, so the mid-18c must, for now, remain blank. Our history resumes with *waka* poet Gatei 賀邸先生 encouraging Karagoromo Kisshû to start the first Edo *kyôka* group. He included Ôta Nanpo, who quickly became known as the *kyôka* genius Yomo no Akara and started his own group. Tenmei *kyôka* began with a bang when young Kisshû and Akara competitively published two big collections of *kyôka* in 1783. Kisshû's had selected poems chaptered by author, while Akara arranged them by theme and with the editorial flair required to hold our attention. His book became so popular it kicked off a *kyôka* fad in Edo that had begun to snowball by the time his 1785 follow-up, the *Tokuwakago kyôka shû* (source of most Tenmei *kyôka* in the *Monster*) created an avalanche great enough to pretty much bury the past. The dynamism of the early-1780 *kyôka* groups came partly from being integrated – *i.e.*, samurai mixed with commoners, but this development, or movement, was stopped cold by a conservative “reform” that clamped down on such social mixing and increased censorship. Yomo no Akara, suspected of having penned a couple squibs, was forced to retire from active *kyôka* activities. He kept writing as Shokusanjin, but was no longer a public figure. In the early-19c, Edo *kyôka* experienced a new, more modest bloom upon sumptuous prints that treated mostly traditional themes, the safest thing considering the government – as appropriate for the New Year when such *surimono* were presented to clients/patrons. And then, *kyôka* is said to have died out. My respondent opined that Shiki killed it by starting modern *tanka*, which permitted so many things *haute culture waka* did not allow that the escape valve of *kyôka* was no longer needed. True, but some *waka* poets – Kotomichi the best example – beat Shiki to the punch by decades; they were just unable to land the knock-out blow. Nada Inada believes it was a change in the social esprit, from one with the leisure to play with words to one with time for business alone, and that this preparation for the industrial revolution was in the air even before it actually landed in Japan. McKee notes the death of the last major poets with Tenmei roots. On final thought, I feel that people who write this and that form of poetry or prose are *always* around and it is more a matter of whether or not they are graced with a public. In fact, even in the Tenmei heyday of *kyôka*, I would bet that we can find thousands of *kyôka* like those of *haikai*-master Issa, hitherto utterly unknown. And if a famous poet's could be overlooked, just imagine . . .

# Acknowledgements (& let this be the *Afterword*)

The 740-page *Monster*, as monsters will, grew so fast there was no time to accrue the usual pile of debts. Indeed, 90% belonged to *one* person, Yoshioka Ikuo 吉岡生夫 a tanka poet and fellow researcher of *kyôka*, who, doing his best to keep up with my flood of questions, generously gave me hundreds of hours of his time. When I write “my respondent,” it usually means him. Without his advice, I might not bought *Kyôka Taikan* (1982) the book that made me make *Mad In Translation* a large introduction to a larger, overlooked genre, instead of a tiny book with a few hundred Tenmei (late 18c) *kyôka* and some old *waka* for comparison’s sake. As a *tanka* poet well-versed in *waka*, he did not always agree with my reading of specific *waka*. His measures of what is what is more exacting than mine. But such was a difference of degree. We both felt from the start that the world of *waka* was diminished by the marginalization and exile of the comic, and I came to see his concern that a lack of attention to the same deprived modern *tanka* of its rich history and indirectly made it all too easy for bores to validate their taste as “traditional.” Please do not hold him responsible for my numerous mistakes. That monster grew so large so fast I did not find time to ask even half the questions I should have and he did not have time to answer all I *did* ask, though he gallantly tried to do so. ★ 底の深い狂歌のウェブサイトもあります。

L.C., a scholar whose reading ability in Japanese and English vocabulary are light-years ahead of mine, had pressing matters over the year I wrote this book and was unable to answer more than a few short questions about *waka*, but deserves a mention for it was he who inadvertently got me started on this book about a year ago by replying to my question about whether anyone had really translated more than a mere sampling of *kyôka*. “No,” he replied, adding that if anyone could do so, *it would have to be me*. He opined that mad poems tended to be too allusive to be pleasurably translated “*but with your approach (paraversing with copious commentary) I expect something could be done, maybe something very effective. . . and wondered “might not a rich swathe of entertaining commentary and perhaps multiple / optional versions allow the patient reader to go back and get the jokes? I.e., I’d be delighted to be proven wrong, and you are the one person I know who might be able to do so.*

Mizukaki 水垣 久 of the Yamatouta website – a labor of love with, not one but a hundred *waka* each for a hundred ancient poets (the Japanese equivalent of Annina Jokinen’s Luminarium for metaphysical poets) – responded to questions about the honest *shigure waka*. He contributed indirectly by putting Shokusanjin’s *Hundred Poets* parody and most of the 1785 *Hundred Demon Night Frenzy* on line. I could not have shared them with you had he not made them public. He did not finish up-loading the latter as he experienced some of the bad luck historically associated with it. As one too snake-bit to be scared of snakes, who trusts because he must in the good luck of bad luck, I, hereby, declare his unlucky streak *over*, and hope he will put the last part of the book on line.

Gohongi Hiroko of Taikado, a used-bookstore for efficiently getting me books without which this book could not have been written. Non-fiction requires sources. We who are not novelists cannot just make up this stuff.

John T. Carpenter responded rapidly and fully to a query about the content of *Reading Surimono* and told me of Daniel McKee's *surimono* books as well.

Edwin A. Cranston responded to questions about some *waka* he translated. My greater debt to him, however, is indirect. His books contained much of value. He has gathered more fresh poetry than any other Japanese-English translator.

Stephen M. Forrest provided a web address for Aston's book of Japanese literature. He did so because I asked a question on PMJS (pre-modern Japanese studies). I thank Michael Watson for starting & others for keeping the group alive.

H. Mack Horton responded with good humor and with just the information I needed about the framing of a certain poem in Anrakuden's *Laughs to Banish Sleep*. Another of his translations was also useful. See the annotated biblio.

Lawrence Marceau for also responding with good humor to questions about a couple poems in respect to this book (not the Monster).

John Solt publisher (highmoonoon press) of *episodic festschrift for Howard Hibbet*, for sending me a fine sampling of comic writing, including *Laughs*, above.

Takanashi Hiroko at Elon University for responding instantly to my request to see her paper (I could not afford) on orthography and punning as exemplified by *kyôka*.

Roger K. Thomas. Learning of his writing about late-18 and 19c *waka* and *kyôka* at last moment, I wrote and he immediately responded with a copy of his article on Kotomichi's understanding of the naturalness of using foreign words.

All my friends in haiku at Satin Doll for moral support that keeps my spirits up. One *haiyû*, Miyoko, failed to find and send me a sample of the summer-sheets (a waffle-weave) I hoped to convince someone in Usania to sell for they save energy by making sweat comfortable, but found other comfortable sheets of a weave far superior to ours which have made me comfortable year-round. When one owns nothing, such little things mean alot. Her contribution helped me sleep and that helped me dream and my dreams helped me translate. (She also sent something a month ago that was probably lost by the USPS or stolen from the box).

My mother prepared me for mad translation from childhood by changing *Peter Piper* to *Porky Porpoise picking plankton*, introducing me to Ogden Nash, *the honorary kyôka poet*, Piet Hein, and Knutson's *Flattened Fauna*, to name some that found their way to the Reader.

Peter Dale for offering to read and help edit. I was too busy reading and writing to take him up on it, but, the vote of confidence helped.

Interlibrary loan in Alachua County for half a dozen books from 4-08 ~ 3-09. And to the Ringling Library for both McKees, N. Texas for offering, Nebraska for sending Carpenter & HU's Yen-ching for the *Broadview* Index.

And should I mention Chen Zhixing whose AI igo program, 手談 *Handtalk*, I play a quick game before work each day, just to see if my mind is ready to go?

Finally, I thank and beg the pardon of others I *ought to* have noted. JR, sending \$200 for just 3 books worth half of that; AK, for assuring me with his interest that this book was not written in vain . . . I am grateful to all who let me know my work is appreciated, for living with little bread and less intercourse – trapped carless in the sticks of Usania – one lives on hope, and that you give me.

# MAD BIBLIOS annotated & occasionally critical

*a much longer version in the 740-page Monster may be viewed online*

**Japanese** – Not alphabetical but in descending order of indebtedness.

**Nihon Kokugo Daijiten.** 日本国語大辞典（縮刷版）小学館 Shogakukan 1980. Without this huge (10 volume reduced print, 20 vol. large print) dictionary serious study of pre-modern Japanese literature is impossible. Most of whatever I search for is in it and there are ample examples from poetry. Neither is true for any other dictionary. I call it the **OJD**, ostensibly after the OED, but actually meaning the “Only Japanese Dictionary.”

**Kyôka Taikan (tk or Broadview).** Meijishôin. vol.1 text. 1982. vol.2 reference 1984. 狂歌大観 狂歌大観刊行会編集 明治書院 本編 1982、参考編 1984。Edited by the Kyokataikankankokai and published by Meiji Shôin in 1982/4, contains about 23,000 poems from a hundred-odd reproduced books of *kyôka*, including collected anthologies, such as the first large one, the 1666 *Kokinikyokushû* (Old & New **Savage** (or, Barbarian) Songs), write-while-you travel collections such as the slightly later *Chishishosaikyôkashô* of which the Arima section edited by Kôfû, who also edited the *Savage* anthology, impressed me, personal collections such as **Mitoku's** 1649 *Gagin Gashû* (I sing my collection), **Getsudôken's** 1688-1703 *Ôuchiwa*, (Big Fan), which gave me scores of poems and even selections of *kyôka* from material of other format such as journals, of which the biggest by far was Asahi **Bunzaemon's** 1684-1717 *Ômurôchûki or Record from the Parrot Cage* with its collected *squibs*, and books of comic stories of which **Anraku Sakuden's** 1623 *Seisuishô*, or *Laughs to Banish Sleep* cannot be beat. They date from the early-13c. to mid-18c, with late-17c to early-18c (mostly by Teiryû or others *not* from Edo) particularly well-covered. With *Broadview* published, there is no longer any excuse for neglecting *kyôka* in Japanese or in translation. The editors were aware of the significance of their volumes for repairing the bias in favor of Tenmei (late 18c Edo) senryû and the vol. I Preface states that if the older poems were sometimes crude, they were also bold and prolific, overflowing with a primal creativity lost when the Tenmei poets polished the genre. Most of the non-Tenmei poems in the *Monster* and this *Reader* come from *Broadview*. A list of those books, with an indication of my indebtedness to each, is in the *Monster's* biblio. They are listed and dated online by Yoshioka Ikuo. (Japanese only).

**Shokusan Kashû** (Shokusanjin's personal collection) Ed. Fujii Otsuo. With a history of *kyôka* and biography of Shokusanjin by **Kaneko** Jitsue. 1927. (Jitsue is a guess. We find no indication of the pronunciation). 『蜀山家集』ssks 藤井乙男監修. 冒頭の玉の狂歌小史と蜀山人評伝、金子実英著. 昭和二年. Hundreds, maybe thousands of Shokusanjin's poems (If anyone feels like counting, tell me and I'll add the figure to the next edition). I do not know what percent of his poems it is, but the whole man is indeed here. With poems to dancing girls and his dead wife, we feel we get to know the poet. This is what Blyth had, and probably explains why he concentrated on Shokusanjin to the exclusion of all others in his *Oriental Humour*. Kaneko's essays are wonderful and simultaneously do justice to Shokusanjin and the broader (older) history of *kyôka* that was largely ignored until the *Kyôka Taikan* was published in 1982/4. I am so grateful that Kyushu University and, later, J-text saw fit to give us this great volume on-line.

**Senryû Kyôka Shû** Sugimoto Nagashige + **Hamada** Giichirô annot.. Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei 57, Iwanami Shôten: 1958. Hamada is in charge of the *kyôka* part with the representative 827-poem Tenmei *kyôka* work **Tokuwa-kagomanzaishû** (1785), selected by Yomo no Akara (Ôta/Shokusanjin), *Shokusan Hyaku-shû*, or 100 poems by

Shokusanjin, published in 1818, and the 1786 *Azumakyoku Kyôka-bunko*, with one poem each by fifty poets + and some poets who were skipped and added later that year. The 1786 book has brief annotations about each poet added by Hamada. 川柳狂歌集 杉本長重+濱田義一郎校注者 岩波の日本古典文学大系 57. 昭和 33. 狂歌「徳和歌後萬載集」「蜀山百首」「我妻曲狂歌文庫」は濱田の方が担当也。The *Tokuwa* anthology is the source of most of the Tenmei poems by poets other than Shokusanjin in my book. Iwanami has another book with Tenmei *kyôka* I have not yet seen. Hamada's introduction is good for exemplifying basic types of *kyôka* but a bit too Tenmei-centric.

**Kokin Kyôka Daizen.** [General Tenmei. *Kyôka hodgepodge*.] 古今狂歌大全 明治 27 永沢三郎 弘文館 This old (1895) book has about a thousand *kyôka*, almost completely by Tenmei poets and, I would guess, dating between 1783 and 1800. Unfortunately the sources are not given and only two characters of all the poets' names given, which is fine for the famous ones but not for the others. But, I have it on hand – it was very cheap to buy – and, having little else with Tenmei *kyôka*, had to use it.

**Kyôka Hyakunin Isshû**, or *Kyôka Hundred Poets One Poem*. Shokusanjin's parody, or rather rainbow of take-offs on the famous 100 show what a poet with the mind of an editor can do. How fortunate that one kind man, Mizukaki Hisashi, took it upon himself to put all the poems online, with comments and examples of other parodies. 狂歌百人一首 蜀山人 水垣久のお陰でオンライン。

**Hyakki yakyô:** hundred demon night frenzy) 『百鬼夜狂』1785.. The same person who put the Shokusanjin's *Kyôka Hundred Poets* on line, Mizukaki 水垣久 put a good portion of this book with *kyôka* on spooky supernatural creatures by 16 top *kyôka* poets, including Yomo no Akara, on line, too, but not all. He stopped at 60 (I have yet to see the last 40) for reasons I explain in the Acknowledgment. I am grateful to him for not yanking the site, for without it, my entire sampling of spooks would have been from Hearn's *Goblin Poetry*, poem-wise, lower quality.

**Fuboku Waka-shô.** 夫木和歌抄 Selected by Fujiwara Nagakiyo 藤原長清 1310 (1907 reprint). The 20,000+ waka are mostly pretty poor, but there many interesting poems not in the Imperial or even second-rank anthologies, some of which bring us closer to *kyôka* and, this is rare, they are arranged in hundreds of themes.

**Edo Kyôka.** 江戸狂歌 なだいなだ岩波書店 1986. Writer-psychiatrist Nada Inada proves even an amateur could grasp the importance of *kyôka* when great literary critics writing in Japanese or English could not. Socially significant *kyôka* are well-chosen.

**Nichibunken** 日文. The only way a poor, unaffiliated person can read lots of *waka*. Not one book but hundreds are on-line. Unfortunately, the lead-in's and other contextual information as well as *most of the poets' names (!)* are not given. Since the hundreds of thousands of poems were typed in by one kind man, Nara National College of Technology's 奈良工業高等専門学校 Prof. Seta Katsuhiko 勢田勝郭氏, one cannot complain!

**Manyôshû** mys 8c. Annot. by Nakanishi Susumu. Iwanami bunko 万葉集、中西注、岩波文庫(1983/90). Minimal explanations, but with about 5000 poems, extraordinary attention for a cheap pocket book.

**Kokinshû** kks. c905. Kyûsojin Hitaku annot. (Kôdansha gakujutsu bunko 1983/90) (古今集 kks は、久曾神昇 注 講談社学術文庫。The most notes I have ever found in a cheap pocket book, for which I am thankful. of the wit in the original.

**Sanka-shû.** 山家集 Saigyô d.1190. An old Iwanami pb (1928/78 35<sup>th</sup> printing!) with *no notes whatsoever* found in a used bookstore & bought for 25-cents let me introduce plentiful *waka* by Saigyô.

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Shinkokinshû 新古今和歌集 sks 1205. An old Iwanami pb (1929/92 67th printing!). No notes whatsoever. は、岩波の古い文庫。注など全くない。 Had I more notes, I might have translated more poems from it..
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**Shinsen Manyôshû** 新撰万葉集 893-913, and **Kokinwakarokujô** 古今和歌六帖 976-82 (略 kkrj) are not only important for filling in the period between the *Manyôshû* (8c) and *Kokinshû* (early 10c) but interesting in their own right and important for grasping the broader history of Japanese literature that includes *kyôka*. Few Japanese have read them and I would have entirely missed them if not for Cranston 2a.  
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★ **NEW Kyôka Kanshô Jiten** Dictionary of *Kyôka* Appreciation, 『狂歌鑑賞辞典』 (角川 1984) by Suzuki Tôzô 鈴木棠三著 was found after the *Monster* was written but a few things from it added when the reading copy was proofed. Our overlap turned out to be about 5%. Compared to the *Monster*, there is more word-play and less conceptual poems, more 18c and less 17c and more poems used as punchlines in stories.
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English – While my sources are over 90% Japanese, *if* the books within *Kyôka Taikan* (*Kyôka Broad-view*) are not counted individually, I have looked at more English sources, enough to justify alphabetizing by author below:
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**Aston, W.G.** *A History of Japanese Literature* Heinemann: 1899. The description of what is inevitably lost in translation given in the preface is superb and, conceptually speaking, not the least dated. And what honesty! How many of our modern translator-anthologists come out and clearly admit the following? “*In the present volume it has often been necessary to pass over the best and most characteristic passages of an author in favour of others which lent themselves more readily to presentation in an English form.*” His description of *kiôka*, which, as we saw in the front-matter, begins so appreciatively, takes so interesting a turn that I shall quote the entire passage.

*Kioka* (literally “mad poetry”) is a comic and vulgar variety of *Tanka*. There is here an absolute freedom both in respect to language and choice of subject. The *Kioka* must be funny, that is all. In this kind of poetry, of which an immense quantity was produced during the Yedo period, the punning propensity of the Japanese has been allowed full scope. *Share* (rhymes with *sake*) reigns there supreme. *Share* is one of those numerous Japanese words for which there is no exact English equivalent. It may be translated “wit” but in order to express its full meaning a spice of what is comprehended under the terms gaiety, esprit, playful fancy, stylishness, must be added. Japanese wit, like that of other countries, has an element which defies analysis or classification. But the jeu'demots predominates. *Share infests not only the Kioka, but the drama and fiction, to an extent well-nigh intolerable to European tastes.* Dr. Florenz, Professor of Philology in the Imperial University of Tokio, has treated this subject with truly German conscientiousness and erudition in a paper read before the German Asiatic Society of Japan in July 1892. Following a native investigator named Tsuchiko Kaneshiro, he classifies *share* under two heads with divisions and subdivisions, making in all twenty different kinds. Our old enemy the *pivot-word* [first defined by Chamberlain] is here, also the pillow-word, and several varieties of the ordinary pun, with various fearfully complicated acrobatic contortions of speech which I shall not attempt to describe. Even the reader who has a competent knowledge of the language requires a special study to understand and appreciate them. He follows these far-eastern waggeries with a halting step, and frequently finds himself in the position of the Scotchman who was heard suddenly to burst into laughter at a joke which had been made half-



an-hour before. Nothing testifies more strikingly to the nimbleness of the Japanese apprehension than their delight in these “Taschenspielerkunstchen des sprachlichen Ausdrucks” (linguistic prestidigitations), as Dr. Florenz has aptly called them, whether in conversation or in books. *It may be doubted whether such an excessive fondness for mere verbal wit does not amount to a disease, and whether it has not constituted a serious obstacle to the development of higher qualities in their literature.*

The sentences italicized suggest that while Aston defines *kyōka* more broadly and accurately than most moderns who dwell on parody and the 18c, he did not evaluate it highly. However, that is not all. Aston continues to hypothesize that Japanese *had no choice* but rely on short and punning poetry because their limited phonemes, “open vowels preceded by single consonants or none” made not only end-rhyme impossible (or impossibly boring) but “only within the narrowest limits” allowed the poet to, following Pope, “make the sound an echo to the sense.” allowed the crafting of “sound as an echo to the sense.” In other words, he invented a negative theory for the genesis of *kyōka*.

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**The above is roughly as-is in the 740-page Monster. The rest shall be shortened.**

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**Blyth, Reginald H.** *Oriental Humour* Hokuseido: 1959. Includes an idiosyncratic 14-page, 24-poem (16 by Yomo no Akara / Shokusanjin) sampling of *kyōka*. The first example given is a parody of Saigyō’s blossom-viewing poem (a trail-marker left from the year before is not followed in order to see new sights and that becomes a marker misread getting the poet lost). Later given by others, it is not one of *my* favorites as Saigyō’s original idea of looking for his marker so as *not* to see the same thing is more novel than not seeing it and getting lost in the profusion of bloom (a common theme in *haikai*), so the only merit of the *kyōka* is that it changes but one syllabet in the first half of the parody. Otherwise, I was delighted with the choice of poems. *Blyth correctly notes* that *kyōka* “parody” is more a sort of “lightening” of the original than digging at it, and he exemplified it by one more take-off, where a blossom-viewing poem turns into a blizzard and the sedan-men must be paid more (the bonus was like that of the Mexican mariachi, paid in booze 酒代). If I wander describing Blyth’s book, it is because his book is full of life and life is such. Blyth included what would become the three most commonly translated *kyōka*, Shokusanjin’s drunken Spring zig-zagging up the street (the word zig-zag must be Usanian for he uses much less accurate vocabulary), Teiryū’s visiting-Mt.-Fuji-is-better-in-a-dream (his only pre-Tenmei example) and Meshimori’s bad-poets-are-safer-for-not-moving-heaven-&-earth (pg.32). Blyth (like me, sometimes?) makes some wild assertions. While I may quibble with details, who but Blyth will give you a sentence like “*It may be true to say, combining Tertullian and Oscar Wilde, that the only thing we can possibly believe is the impossible.*”? He is second only to Lafcadio Hearn for giving his readers an education in English literature as he introduces Japan in relatively universal terms. Any book by Blyth is worth reading. The delightful hyperlogical Chinese humour alone merits a reprint of this one.

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**Bownas & Thwaite** (Geoffrey Bownas, Anthony Thwaite) *The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse*, 1964. Most books of Japanese poetry without the originals to compare and notes are not worth the paper they are on, but these translations are good enough to make it the exception. It has the usual handful of *kyōka*. Only a handful.

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**Braunen, Noah.** “*Mad Poems*” from *Japan’s Unknown Surimono*. Article in Rutgers “Painted Bride Quarterly” 40/41 double issue. Egs. of *surimono* poems. (*Monster* only)

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**Carpenter, John T. et alfred Haft and others.** *Reading Surimono: the Interplay of Text and Image in Japanese Prints* with a Catalogue of the Marino Lusy Collection. Leiden, 2008. +Hotei Publishing. With 300 *surimono* (fancy color prints) with two or more *kyōka* each, all translated and explained this is at least 20x more translated *kyōka* than I knew existed in any single work other than my book to be and I only found this book the day before I was set to call it quits and start the index. Why? Because it came from the world of art rather than literature. The eleven illustrated essays comprising the

first quarter of *Reading Surimono* alone would make a fine book. I learned something from each. Because of the cornucopia of allusions in the prints and poems, Carpenter wrote, “a study of surimono could amount to a wide-ranging albeit eclectic, survey of pre-modern Japanese literature and culture.” It not only “could” but *does* become just that in this book about “the most extraordinarily literate form of printmaking in world history.” The lengthy explanation of the cultural background of the pictures and poems beats anything I have seen other than McKee’s work, which does the same.

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**Carter, Steven D.**, *Traditional Japanese Poetry*. Stanford University Press: 1991. Only seven of 1157 poems are *kyôka*. Carter says nothing demeaning about *kyôka*, but notes the emphasis on “wordplay (is) so complicated it can only be suggested in translation.” Perhaps that is why he did not translate more, though he is definitely not adverse to humor as he did a good job of finding and translating many witty *waka* and *haikai*, including some of each I think qualify as *kyôka* so his book is my favorite one-book selection and translation of what its title says. While syllable-padding hurts some translations, many are excellent for he pays more attention to beat than is usual and is creative (eg. the last line to his *honobono to akashi* . . . translation: “my heart following in its wake.” その暗喩も旨いぞ)

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**Cranston, Edwin A.** “A Waka Anthology” Translated, with Commentary, Appendixes, and Notes by ~, Stanford University Press Vol 1: *The Gem Glistening Cup* (1993), Vol.2a and 2b: *Grasses of Remembrance* (2006). I like Cranston’s attitude toward translation and the readings that follow his creed (“Anything that works justifies itself, ipso facto”). ©Re. his Vol.1 (largely the *Manyôshû*), he admits “there is not a poem in this volume that has not been rendered into English at least once and sometimes several times before,” but only he gracefully introduces so many of the poems with their poets that someone who has read them in Japanese gains something. And, his books are readable because he explains most things on the same page rather than by end note. Our biggest difference is that his explanations precede the poems, mine follow. ★ Vol.2a has more *waka* never before rendered into English for the first time than any other book, with the possible exception of Honda’s *Manyôshû* translations (so sketchy as to be useless to we who read Japanese). And, Cranston’s selection includes many *waka* of the type I would call *wild* or even ‘mad’ from anthologies rarely read by Japanese today. Most of those are damn hard to English and require a translator to go farther out the limb than most academics, fearful of critics, dare. Cranston, bless him, often does. And, he promises to follow the practice of the Sinosphere and exercise more poetic license, mad abandon or whatever you call it with each volume to come, as *expected* for an elder. In case any of the comparisons of my mad translations and his plain ones did not support my enthusiasm for his work (sometimes I may make choices that make me look good), here is an example of a good translation of a *waka* sent to the Emperor by Kiritsubo no Kôï from I forget which anthology: “Now the end has come, / We part along diverging paths, / And one sad desire / Still lies heavy in my heart: / To live, not leave, our life.” (*Kagiri tote wakuru michi no kanashiki ni ikama hoshiki wa inochi narikeri*). That last line is one to die for! I only wish the index for vol 2a were in 2a and not 2b! As the books are too expensive for me to buy, I had to use library loan and never had both books together to find things! Almost everything from the *Shinsen Manyôshû*=*ssmys*, and most from the *Gosenshû* = *gss*, *Shûishû* = *sis* and *Kokinwakarokujô* = *kkrij* come from that volume, which the publisher should rush to put out in paperback with its own index at a decent price. With POD printing, there is no excuse for not doing this. © Vol.2b, with all the poems in the *Tale of Genji*, had little for *this* book, but if you would grasp the conceptual and emotional underpinnings of what some consider the world’s first true novel . . .

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**Gill, Robin D.:** ©*Topsy-turvy 1585* (paraverse press: 2005). Luis Frois listed 611 ways Europe and Japan are contrary in Portuguese in the 16c. All are translated and discussed. They are supplemented by hundreds more. This makes the book a one-stop reference for things Japanese and saves me much time otherwise lost searching for citations. © *The Woman Without a Hole, or Octopussy, Dry Kidney & Blue Spots* (paraverse press: 2007). The only book in English on and of *dirty senryû*. It is one book with two names



and a good reference for sex in the poetry and song of Japan. It complements *this* book, for one fills in the hitherto neglected half of Japanese poetry below the navel and the other that found above the neck. If *senryū* were neglected for being obscene; *kyōka* were neglected for being hyper-rational, or *rikutsuppoi*. © *The Fifth Season* (paraverse press: 2007). Full of Edo period New Year haiku, a big help for reading *surimono* pictures and *kyōka*, for they are largely about that season. © *The Cherry Blossom Epiphany* (paraverse press: 2007). The 3,000 old haiku include over a score of waka by Saigyō, many of which I feel verge on being *kyōka*. © *Rise Ye Sea Slugs!* The *namako*, so common in *haikai*, is so rare in *kyōka* that this book was only cited a two or three times. Since the camel and the elephant do well enough, it is odd that the sea cucumber is so slighted. ★ For more of and on my books, please see the publicity at the end of the book.

**Hearn, Lafcadio:** *Goblin Poetry* (in 1905 *Romance of the Milky Way*). With scores of poems from Tenmei Rōjin (Takumi Jingoro), i.e., Tenmei (era) Elder ed. *Kyōka Hyaku-Monogatari* 狂歌百怪物語 (1853) translated, this was not only the first introduction of *kyōka* in English but the largest selection Englished until this book (unless scores of Ryōkan's poems translated might be called *kyōka*, but I have not seen them to judge) – with the exception of art books of *surimono* (luxurious prints+*kyōka*) I learned of so late I had to insert this qualification – Hearn knew he was breaking new ground and defined it well:

The word “kyōka” is written with a Chinese character signifying “insane” or “crazy,” and it means a particular and extraordinary variety of comic poetry. The form is that of the classic *tanka* of thirty-one syllables (arranged 57577); — but the subjects are always the extreme reverse of classical; and the artistic effects depend upon methods of verbal jugglery which cannot be explained without the help of numerous examples.

Judging from the examples Hearn gives, there are *some* puns, but they seldom match the wilder *waka*, much less the wild conceptual play of good Tenmei era *kyōka* which made the form so popular. But that may be because Hearn selected for easy translation, so I will withhold judgment on the original until I read it. Like most translators, but more openly, Hearn did not attempt to translate the poems as poems, and uses brackets to indicate that. He also admits to omitting *kyōka* “dealing with fancies too gruesome for Western nerves . . . also those treating of merely local tradition.” (Thanks to Google Books + Univ. of California for access to *Goblin Poetry* via Lafcadio Hearn's Writings ed. by Elizabeth Bisland)

**Hein, Piet. Grooks.** *All of his collections* (generally “with the assistance of Jens Arup”) embody the mind of the conceptual *kyōka*. They were popular in the late-60's and early 70's in English, but are timeless and should still be in every library and bookstore.

**Hoffman, Yoel.** *Japanese Death Poems – Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death*. Charles E. Tuttle Company. 1986. This book contains more *kyōka* than any other (excluding *surimono*) in English, for most of the 31-syllabet death-poems – many actually included in *kyōka* anthologies – could be called *kyōka*, yet only a couple are so recognized. Dying Japanese were so good-humored that this may be the finest book of Japanese humor ever written in English.

**Horton, H. Mack.** *The Journal of Sōchō*. Translated and annotated by ~ (Stanford University Press, 2002). Most of the link-verse master's poems are not *kyōka* but the journal includes the sort of personal exchanges, poems-as-communication where *kyōka* thrive and there are some good ones. This is the rare translation with sufficient notes. © *Laughs to Banish Sleep*. Anrakuan Sakuden: 1628. Part of the Highmoonoon episodic festschrift series for Howard Hibbet. This tiny but fine sampling from a huge book of humor includes some poems I consider *kyōka*.

**Keene, Donald, World Within Walls:** Japanese Literature of the Pre-modern Era, 1600-1867. Columbia University Press, 1999. The most thorough (though limited) history of *kyōka* I have seen in English. While the perspective is stereotypical, the sort of thing a Japanese scholar of classical literature who knew little about *kyōka* might write, it is well

done, for Keene *is* always keen. Unfortunately, the stereotypes are about as far from reality as any stereotypes I know. *Compare the Teitoku and Yûchôrô you have come to know in this book with Keene's disparaging words about them* – and that, despite giving a large chapter to Teitoku, whose talent in every field of letters he intermittently peed on (Keene's attitude being, he was the leading man of letters for half a century, so I must, *sigh!* give him all this space) – and compare the breadth of poetic device you have found here (even in the Tenmei period, alone) with Keene's idea of *kyôka* as little more than parody, etc. and . . . .. When Keene writes "*Kyôka was a minor form of poetry, but considering how little humor there is in Japanese literature, we should be grateful for the work of some gifted poets who occasionally approached the realm of genuine comic art.*" half of me thinks of the razor-sharp wit of Seishônagon and the hyper-logical play born of the editorial surrealism in Edo and says *Keene has lost it*, but the other half wonders if he may have a point: Who in Japan/ese has created anything like the finely knit wit of our "Will to boot and Will in overplus" (his word) with his sonnets? Or, proceeding from the Bard to the Dean, could any Japanese ape Ovid and wax logically and lyrically for over a page to conclude "*Caelia shits!*"? I imagine Keene's capacious cranium has a large store-house of Occidental "genuine comic art" – and judges Japanese by comparison to it, while mine, lacking capacity, must pretty much forget English wit to find room for the Japanese, which is more than abundant enough to fill it. So, who am I, with my limited memory and absent library, to doubt him? But, let me say this. Seeing the "episodic festschrift," a series of tiny books translating short work or selections of Edo avant-garde literature, to celebrate the career of Howard S. Hibbett compiled by John Solt and published by his highmoonoon press, it is obvious that *we have barely scratched the surface of Japanese humor*. It may well be that Japan boasts more not less "genuine comic art" than a comparative-sized culture in the West. If a few of the booklets in that series were expanded (not just commentary, but more material translated) and more books on supposedly "minor" popular genre – eg. my dirty senryû (*The Woman Without a Hole*), Adam L. Kern's Edo era literary comics, (*Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyôshi of Edo Japan*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.), etc. – we might be able to not only prove Keene wrong, but convince ourselves of it.

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McKee, Daniel. *Colored in the Year's New Light: Surimono from the Becker Collection.* Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell:2008. And *Japanese poetry prints : surimono from the Schoff Collection* Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art 2006. Much of what I wrote about Carpenter's book applies. McKee did a beautiful job of introducing the Japanese New Year Season, directly or indirectly the subject of most surimono, and analyzing the world of commissioning *surimono* with particular attention paid to Magao, and translated and explains hundreds of poems. He makes an interesting point about art-related translation –

"catalogues of collections are often looked down upon as the poor cousins of monographs, but in many respects present a much greater challenge to their authors, as well as a more objective representation of a given field. Rather than working with a chosen set of materials, largely already mastered and selected toward a given end, the cataloguer of a collection is faced with a group of predetermined objects covering a variety of areas, which must somehow be incorporated into a meaningful whole."

Exactly. I think it explains why his and Carpenter's art books may be the best introduction to *kyôka* in English that we have up to *Mad In Translation*. The poems are thematically ordered rather than by artist, as with Carpenter's *Reading Surimono* –

Time: picture calendars, zodiac, seasons, meanings of spring, exorcisms, . . . Place: poetic places, travel, landscapes, famous goods, . . . Entity: Commoners, Warriors, . . . Celebrities, Nature and Animals, Evocative Objects . . .

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**Satchell, Thomas.** See Ikku (Jippensha Ikku) in Bios of the *Monster* for examples of rhymed *kyôka* translation within an early 19c novel, *Shanks Mare* (Tôkaidô Hizakurige).

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Sato, Hiroaki and Burton Watson. *From the Country of Eight Islands: An Anthology of Japanese Poetry.* Columbia University Press, 1986. I did learn it had only nine.

Shirane, Haruo and James Brandon, *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600-1900*. Columbia University Press, 2002. While not so detailed as Keene, neither is it so prejudiced. Shirane does not put down *kyôka* and notes how popular narratives included it; but he still introduces less than a dozen, mostly borrowed from Burton Watson (with Sato, above). Does he 1) not appreciate the importance of the B-side of 31-syllabet poetry? 2) Hesitate to translate wit? Or, is it simply that he did more gathering than translating and the material was just not yet out there in English?

Takanashi, Hiroko. *Orthographic puns: The case of Japanese kyôka*. International Journal of Humor Research. Volume 20, Issue 3, Pages 235–259. *The paper proposes a cognitive model for processing humor in puns written in kanji (logographs) and kana (phonographs) in kyôka and shows how kyôka poets manipulate the use of kanji and kana orthography to trick their readers in different ways, directing readers to different processing routes of kanji and kana puns.* (from abstract).

Tanaka, Rokuo: “Forgotten Women: Two Kyôka Poets of the Temmei Era” in Jessica Milner Davis ed. *Understanding Humor in Japan*. Wayne State University Press, 2006. * That two top Tenmei era female kyôka poets could be written up when no scholar has done the same for the more famous (male) kyôka poets may tell us something about academia and publishing today. While I take issue with some claims, eg. “Kyôka does not employ the traditional fixed epithets and decorative modifiers (*makura kotoba* or pillow words) that were so often integral elements of traditional waka,” (rather, *kyôka* sometimes does play with said elements), Tanaka writes well, and I only wish he wrote a book rather than a chapter in one. Unfortunately, he is no longer with us.

Thomas, Roger K. *Macroscopic vs. Microscopic: Spatial Sensibilities in Waka of the Bakumatsu Period*. 1998 Harvard-Yenching Institute. On what is natural or native and how that related to the language of *waka* according to Kotomichi. (Only in the Monster)

Ueda, Makoto. *Bashô and His Interpreters*. Stanford University Press 1992. I have quoted little from this book but introduce it *as the only book of translated haiku I know other than mine that provides sufficient interpretation to give readers an idea of what goes on in the heads of those who read Japanese haiku in the original*. It incidentally demonstrates that the multiple readings I bring to poems, while odd, perhaps, does come closer to representing the way poems are read collectively than single translations.

Utamarô: *A Chorus of Birds* (momochidori kyôka awase 1790), intro. Julia Meech-Pekarik, note on kyôka and transl. James A Kenney (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Viking Press: 1981). Total 30 *kyôka*. The translator’s brief note on the history and nature of *kyôka*, called “mad verse” is short and sweet. (Only cited in the Monster)

Watson, Burton. see Sato, for his *kyôka* translations.

XYZ All the Books or Papers I missed. As my occasional complaints in the text, notes, biblios and bios make obvious, there is more I still need to see – mostly in Japanese – than what I have seen already. I know what I need to see (but cannot afford) in Japanese. If you know of anything I should see in English, please do not hesitate to contact me, but remember that I am not near a library, only rarely can use interlibrary loan, cannot buy anything and must beg for handouts (extra papers or books) until my circumstances change. Also, as I prefer to concentrate on sifting out poems I like from large collections in the original so I can myself grasp the measure of the poets and their books and re-creating them in English to nit-picking analysis based upon the opinion and selection of others, my main need is for primary material (in print, though, not script).

♪ Perhaps, I should have tried to describe *The 740-page Monster*, MAD IN TRANSLATION but I am not sure what I think of it. You may find it all on line.

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 Only some mentions of some 書, or *Books*, are here, for I only thought of it as a separate category for the index at the last minute, pulling them out of the other *Things* that follow. And, many just were not there. I know, for example, that *Laughs to Banish Sleep* appears many times. Unless readers remember to look up Anraku Sakuden, or Horton, [H.Mack](#) (though not all his entries concern it), it would be lost. But, this book will be lost to Christmas buyers in its first year out if the author messes around with it any longer. Besides, all such missing things may be searched for on-line, for the whole book is not only viewable but searchable at Google Books.

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The 物, or *Things* here include major themes, minor themes, and clearly unimportant, not to mention nonsensical items. Many might be called “things your translator thought amusing and therefor worthy of note that a more objective scholar would have left hiding inside the book or never allowed in it to begin with.” If there is anything you think really should be in the index that is not there, please let me know and maybe it will get into the next edition. Also, note that once a book is searchable on line, as all Paraverse Press books are, the Index is little more than a convenience for those with poor internet connections or who, heaven forbid, use the index in bed or on the john. No index can out-detail a digital search, so we need to reconsider the purpose and use of indices. Otherwise, the Index will become extinct and no one will miss them.  
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Reviews & Supplemental Information about books in English by Robin D. Gill

Rise, Ye Sea Slugs! (1,000 *ku* re. sea cucumbers compiled & transl. from Japanese). paraverse 2003. pp 480.

“I wondered, can one really devote 480 pages to haiku on sea slugs? The answer is emphatically ‘yes.’ Although difficult to read from beginning to end, this book contains great learning and insight, and deserves a wide reading among specialists and non-specialists alike.”

“For many of the haiku, Gill gives multiple translations as a way of showing possible interpretations. I know of no other book of English translations of haiku that goes to such lengths to explain translations, which in Gill’s hands are accurate, economical, and often elegant.”

“For all the eccentricities one might expect (and does find) in a book devoted entirely to Japanese haiku on the sea slug, the author is an accomplished haiku writer, a very talented and engaging critic, capable of reading with an acute understanding of culture and cultural differences.”

–Thomas H. Rohlich, Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Smith College, from *Metamorphoses: the journal of the five college faculty seminar on literary translation* (Vol. 13.1, Spring 2005).

“This single-topic tome may be our best English-language window yet into the labyrinth of Japanese haikai culture. If you have read Yasuda, Blyth, Henderson, Ueda, and Shirane, then read Gill. He will expand your mind. If you have not read those guys yet, then read Gill first. He’s more fun.”

– William J. Higginson, author of *Haiku World*, in *Modern Haiku* (volume 35.1 winter-spring 2004).

♪ *The haiku are from the early-Edo period to the present. The apparently featureless sea cucumber (namako) offered a unique opportunity for poets to treat what amounts to a ding en sich, and the results were poems pushing the limits of natural observation on the one hand and metaphysics on the other. Some of the latter bear resemblance to kyōka in their logic-born dry wit, and are what I call ‘kyōku’ in this book.*



Re: **Fly-ku!** (Translations of fly & fly-swatting *ku*, + an in-depth study of Issa’s famous fly-ku, “Don’t swat!”) 2005

“An American scholar and poet who writes in an extemporaneous style akin to that of Jack Kerouac; thinks like Herman Hesse, Koyabashi Issa, and Lewis Carroll, all rolled into one.”

– Robert D. Wilson, founder of the on-line magazine *Simply Haiku* (2005-summer). Also author of *Jack-fruit*.

“Gill strikes us as no less than amazing. Why isn’t he teaching at Yale, or the University of California, or Tokyo University? His references include no end of obscure Japanese lore, plus quotes and notes from such artists as Clare, Lovelace, Steinbeck, Dumont, Verdi, Satie, Blyth, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson.”

– Carlos Amantea, author of *The Blob That Ate Oaxaca* R.A.L.P.H. (Review of Art, Literature, Philosophy & History)

♪ *Not as much natural history in this wee bk. as in Rise, Ye Sea Slugs!, but a good discussion of the supposed anthropomorphic fallacy & a comparison of translations of “Don’t swat/hit/kill” the fly that gives great detail on what makes “precise” translation between exotic tongues impossible. If you want more on just that problem, with especial attention to word-order vs flow please read the yet-unreviewed **Orientalism & Occidentalism** – Is the mistranslation of culture inevitable? (paraverse press 2004); and see my newest book which shall be published soon after this one, **A Dolphin In the Woods** – paraversing, distillation & composite translation. Besides giving examples of poems with two to a score of translations, it gives chapters to books including *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* and *Le Ton beau de Marot*.*

Re: **Cherry Blossom Epiphany** (Three thousand *ku+ka* on blossom-viewing, including many by Sôgi) 2007, pp.740

“It was bad old Ezra Pound, acknowledging his heavy debt to haiku in translation, who affirmed that the first rule of poetry was “Make it new.” This is something Gill has done more effectively, as far as remaking haiku in English goes, than anyone else around. . . .

“One of my favorites is on p. 375, where no less than seven translations are proposed, but four of them “*sous rature*,” or *_misekechi_* [‘erasures shown,’ literally]: in old Japanese, words crossed out in a manuscript but left legible enough that the reader can see what was discarded, and imagine why. (Publishers with accountants are not likely to tolerate this kind of haikaesque mischief. Gill gets away with it only because he is his own publisher.) And (another reason, if needed) in his commentary Gill distances himself from the conventions of pedantry just as effectively as the haikai poets he translates departed from the venerable (and staid and eventually stuffy) traditions of classical linked verse to make something new.”

– Lewis Cook, professor of Japanese literature, CUNY (in a blog at one of Gabi Greve’s fine haiku *kigo* and Buddhism-related sites, in response to another’s questions about my work.

“This book is exceedingly delightful – what word could be more accurate I cannot say! Here is a guide to allow every reader to play with their own translations of these poems – indeed all the important ingredients – are amply included: . . . nothing in this book is cut in stone – it is pure water, ever-flowing – and that is what is so inspiring about it, its generosity and delightful creativity!” – s.w. at mountainanddrivers.org

♪ *Professor Cook has a broader perspective and more discriminating vocabulary to bring to bear upon what I am doing than I have or ever hope to have. Perhaps this book is, in both senses of the word, fresher yet, though I am well aware that Harold Stewart did intelligent and often stylistically pleasing rhymed couplet translations of haiku a half-century ago and some translators of comic tales have rhymed poems of kyôka length (or the thing itself) they correctly recognized were meant to add a witty and comic touch to the narrative. To my mind, the one thing that no reviewer nor anyone that I know of (formally or informally) has attempted to evaluate is the success/failure of the ways in which I chapter, i.e. divide the poems into sub-themes, something different for Sea Slugs, Flies, Cherry Blossoms and the New Year (The Fifth Season, below). I write this partly because the presentation of hyper-short poetry depends on context and because I am afraid the horrible arrangement of Mad In Translation may be noted somewhere.*



Re: **The Fifth Season** (2000 *ku* on 20 New Year themes & first book of ten in the IPOOH series 2007, pp.500)

No reviews interesting enough to quote, so let me explain. Excluding books on *surimono*, beautiful color-prints accompanied by *kyôka*, published by presses or lines of books dedicated to *art* rather than literature, the New Year, once the Original, or First Season, of the *five* seasons of haiku, has been neglected in favor of the other four by Occidental translators. *The Fifth Season* finally gives this supernatural or cosmological season – one that combines aspects of the Solstice, Christmas, New Year’s, Easter, July 4th and the Once Upon a Time of Fairy Tales – its due. *This book brings the Moon back into the calendar and humans back into haiku.* On the whole, New Year haiku in Japanese tend to share more with ‘mad poems’ than those of any other season. That may be why they were short-changed in translation (even by Blyth). And it may also be why readers of *Mad In Translation* may appreciate this book that has sold only a dozen or two copies since being published (*In Praise of Old Haiku* saijiki project has been suspended – not cancelled – until my S.S. Readership comes into sight)!

◆ Other Books by Robin D. Gill 又は、在りし日のロビン・ギルの諸単作は ◆

See the author’s *Biblio* heading for **Topsy-Turvy 1585** (Luis Frois re. 611 ways Europeans & Japanese are contrary), a book often cited in this one & my dirty senryû book of two titles. Please the Paraverse Press website for information on *The Cat Who Thought Too Much*, *A Dolphin In the Woods* and other books to come, health and wealth willing, as well as summaries and reviews of his published books in Japanese.

kono uta no kokoro o ika ni gaten ja ka
此歌の心をいかにがてんじやか
iwazu to saku mo tôri mono-me wa
いはずと作もとをりものめは

Kuroda Getsudôken
黒 田 月 洞 軒

*So tell me just what this poem means,
You who say a work speaks for itself!*

There is a school of thought that holds poetry to be above explanation and feels the proper thing to do is simply read what is on the page. This opinion, or prejudice against explanation is found in English and in Japanese. We tend to think of poetry as a sort of art or mystery apt to be ruined by clarification while Japanese are more likely to feel respect to the original demands it be read *sunao ni*, or meekly, taking it as-is, without putting your self into it.

Yet, Japanese *kyôka* poets often prefaced their poems as such explanation was needed for others to make out the meaning of the short poem. To my mind, it does not hurt them at all and proves explanation and poetry are not mutually exclusive but may be complementary. Considering our different life experiences, cultural background and linguistic skills, one wonders if anyone but the poet can read *any* poem “as (it) is.” Add an exotic foreign language and there is no room for even a rhetorical question. It is usually *impossible*.

Lack of explanation and unacceptable loss in translation may be related. Write a patent and you learn that numerous discoveries are made while elaborating *one's invention*. Explaining a poem while, or in addition to translating it jars loose hitherto submerged wit to float up from between the old lines to the eyes of one ready to recognize and try to recover it. There is no small irony here, for, if your translator is correct, there are circumstances where explanation, far from killing wit, saves it.

Late-17c *kyôka* master Getsudôken's meta-poem, or poem about poetry, is delightful for being rude as hell – the *me* in *mono-me* is derogatory – in a culture that was notably civil, though if we read the Japanese as *saku mo tôri mo nomeba*, another reading is possible:

*How can you tell just what this poem means?
Stay mum & swallow the whole hill of beans!*

While playing upon an ancient Chinese *Shi-jing* poem about how flowering trees 桃李 – not *toori* but *touri*, a pun guessable because of the phrase “without saying a word” (including *iwazu* in Japanese) – open up pathways for spring by attracting visitors with their beauty. He also may intend a pun on 作 as *sake* (possible but not probable); so, if we imagine the petals of the peach and plum falling in it:

*If you this poem would hope to crack,
Drink sake w/ plum bloom and lie back!*

This *was* the frontispiece but, fearing my inability to arrive at a final solution might scare off readers, I moved it to the back of the book.

